

THE CHURCH, MARY AND WOMANHOOD:
EMERGING ROMAN CATHOLIC TYPOLOGIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter 1 (Part One)	5
NO ROOM AT THE INN	
1 Ruether: Expressions of Patriarchy	5
Patriarchal Heritage	
Patriarchal Christology	
Sexism	
Contraception and Homosexuality	
2 Patriarchal Consolidation	17
Church Ministry	
Excluding Women	
In <i>Persona Christi</i>	
Stumbling Block	
3 The Institution Revisited	28
Remaining Within	
Second Vatican Council: A Watershed	
Second Vatican Council: A Marian Balance	
Tension in Change	
4 Three Marian Typologies	50
The Christatype	
The Theatype	
The Ecclesiatype	
Chapter 2 (Part Two)	61
A CROWN OF TWELVE STARS	
5 Elements of the Theatypical Model	61
Mary's Perpetual Virginity	
Mary's Virginal Motherhood	
Mary's Immaculate Conception	
6 Daughters of Eve	73
Mary and Eve	
Brides of Christ	
Mary and Elements of the Divine	

7	The Age of <i>Theotokos</i>	89
	<i>Theotokos</i> : The Background The Development of <i>Theotokos</i> Emerging Theatypology	
8	A Contemporary Theatypology	104
	Leonardo Boff: The Immaculate Conception Leonardo Boff: The Virginal Conception Leonardo Boff: The Divine Motherhood	
Chapter 3 (Part Three)		113
	YOU HAVE FOUND FAVOUR WITH GOD	
9	Goddess Talk	113
	Goddess Feminism Ruether's Critique The Goddess The Goddess Eclipsed	
10	Ruether and Theatypology	133
	The Goddess and Mary The Midrash The Lady and Mary	
Chapter 3 (Part Four)		145
11	The Christatypical Approach	145
	The Early Fathers Devotions and Apparitions Co-Redeemer Mediatrix The Assumption	
12	Ruether and Christatypology	174
	Ruether: Mary's co-Redemption Ruether: Mary's mediation Ruether: Mary's Assumption The New Israel	

Chapter 4 (Part Five)	185
O WOMAN WHAT HAVE YOU TO DO WITH ME?	
13 Documents of Appeasement	185
Attempts at Change	
"Partners in the Mystery of Redemption"	
"One In Christ Jesus"	
"Called to be One in Christ Jesus"	
Mulieris <i>Dignitatem</i>	
14 Ruether's Liberating Response	213
The Reign of God	
The <i>Praxis</i> of Jesus	
Promising Perspectives	
Chapter 4 (Part Six)	237
15 Ecclesiastical Foundations	237
Ecclesiastical Basis: The Early Fathers	
Ecclesiastical Basis: Otto Semmelroth	
Ecclesiastical Constituents: Paul VI	
Ecclesiastical Constituents: John Paul II	
Chapter 5 (Part Seven)	264
A PLACE IN THE UPPER ROOM	
16 Approaching Theatypology	264
Anne Carr: A General Perspective	
Kari Borresen: <i>Mater Ecclesiae</i>	
Maria Kassel: Mary as Archetype	
Transforming the Archetype	
17 Ruether: An Ecclesiastical Foundation	282
The Historical Mary	
The Faith of Mary	
The Mary of Faith	
Christ and Mary	
The Church, Christ and Mary	
18 The Ecclesiastical Approach	305
Mary Symbol of Liberation	
Mary's <i>Magnificat</i>	
Mary as Disciple	
Mary as Womanguide	

CONCLUSION	326
ABBREVIATIONS	334
BIBLIOGRAPHY	337

INTRODUCTION

So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the one do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise have eyes in their head, but fools walk in darkness. Yet I perceived that the same fate befalls all of them. Then I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also; why then have I been so very wise?" And I said to myself this also is vanity (Eccles 2:12-15).¹

Is it wisdom, madness, folly or vanity to embark on a thesis which tries to prove that there is some kind of theological mediation point to be found between the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church and those within the Institution who espouse the ideals of Christian feminism? Certainly, it would not be usual to introduce a thesis with an extract taken from a Book that tends to be viewed as fatalistic. Yet, it is relevant here because it reflects a hope born out of the ambiguous position pertaining to the role of women in the Catholic Church today. Furthermore, consideration of the quotation will explain the feelings of confusion, hope and excitement one might be likely to experience in the pursuit of such a task. This onerous proposal comes from a feeling that it is worthwhile to remain within the Institution despite the rough justice meted out to women who have been so very loyal to the Church throughout the centuries.

Yet, is it fair to ask of women who feel betrayed by the Institution to remain within its restrictive structures? Perhaps not, but it might be worthwhile to point out that if they leave there will be no-one interested enough to effect liberating change. Those who decide to stay in the Institution should remember that they can set about their task without having to pay lip-service either to blind faith or to subservient obedience. Emanating from this request the present thesis aims to find a theological common denominator which would make both the women in question and the Church authorities feel comfortable. Inevitably, at this stage, one might begin to enquire as to how one

¹ Except where they are inclusive of other authors' quotations, all scriptural references in this thesis, are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, World Bible Publishing Inc., 1989.

might find suitable data to fit into the above scheme. A response to this question centres on the need to consider three areas of discipline. The first calls for an account of some contemporary Christian feminist thinking in relation to the teaching of the Catholic Church (Christian feminism). The second requires some understanding of the official position of the Church's more problematic teachings in relation to women (official Church teaching). The principle concern, however, is to find a theology which will act as a mediating agent between the two positions. Somewhat surprisingly, this takes the shape of one particular aspect of Marian theology (ecclesiatypology) which will be referred to below. Marian theology, then, becomes a major focus of the thesis.

It must be stated here that it is quite difficult to juggle three different disciplines effectively. The following outline, therefore, offers a brief preview as to the thesis' proposal. The first chapter will offer a feminist perspective of the official teaching of Roman Catholicism as it has been portrayed both in the tradition and in contemporary times. Rosemary Radford Ruether, a Roman Catholic, is the obvious choice since, time and again, she has called upon women to remain within the Church so that they might work from a strong institutional base. Her writings on many of the Church's teachings in relation to women often have been critical but always loyally constructive. Given Radford Ruether's extensive *oeuvre* it would not be possible to offer anything other than a summary series of accounts on the more crucial issues.

From here it will be shown that some of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) left a door open (albeit slightly) for the advancement of women within the Church. However, it is not the sparse references to women (laypeople) that offers a hope for the mediatory perspective. Rather, this hope is to be found in the Council's treatment of Mary, the mother of Jesus, which is contained in a document entitled *Lumen Gentium*. Exploring *Lumen Gentium* has shown that there is a similarity between the ecclesiological approach to Marian theology and that proposed by some of

Ruether's Marian works. Here, at last, we have a noteworthy common denominator. However, to suggest that the theological mediation point has been found and to pursue it from here would be somewhat naive. Much more has to be discovered with respect to Marian theology itself.

This is an extremely complex and ancient discipline as it is found in the Roman Catholic tradition. Upon studying its history and theology I discovered that it required some kind of categorisation to control the material. Not for the first time has a theologian embarked on such a pursuit. Yet, I did not wish to become embroiled in the old, tried and tested methods. Insofar as I did I discovered that they were unsuitable for my purposes so, for this reason, I divided Marian theology into three different models or types. There is no need to develop my thinking on these here as their purpose and function will become apparent in the respective chapters. Suffice it to say that the three types are known as the theotypical, christotypical and ecclesiotypical approaches to Marian theology. The former is a new type which I have built up myself and the latter two are accounted for in the tradition although references to them are rare. Therefore, I felt I could take the liberty of formulating my own understanding of these typologies moving away from the much under-represented traditional understanding.

The second chapter of this thesis outlines the theotypical approach as a model of Marian theology and the third outlines the christotypical approach as a model. Both of these are rejected as a way forward for either the doing of Marian theology or as the hope of theological mediation between Radford Ruether and the Church. On the other hand, the fifth chapter deals with the ecclesiotypical model and it explores how Radford Ruether and the official teaching of the Church find their common denominator within that context.

Given, that the main focus of this thesis is not simply about Marian theology but, rather, about the finding of a common mediating principle more has to be said of Christian feminist views and where they connect with the teaching of the Church outside of Marian theology. Therefore, some mention must be made of Radford Ruether's work in relation to Goddess feminism (chapter three) and her understanding of liberation theology in relation to Church teaching in general and to Marian theology in particular (chapters three and four respectively). Equally, it is important to note that the Church authorities, for their part, have also made efforts to dialogue with women in round-the-table conferences to try to come to some kind of mutual agreement. Radford Ruether in this respect has responded to some of these dialogues of which a brief account will be taken. In addition, the present Pope John Paul II also has written a document on the dignity of women which is of significance to the debate.

Perhaps at this stage one final comment should be made which in some way reflects the sentiments of the scripture quotation at the beginning of the introduction. The extract centres on the wisdom, madness, folly and vanity that one encounters in the mystery of human life. There are many who would argue that such is the fate deserving of anyone who attempts to write a thesis about the ideals of Christian feminism and how they are received in the Roman Catholic Church. Perhaps they are right but it is encouraging to know that despite the weaknesses of human nature there is good will on both sides which springs from a strong belief in the rightness of Christianity no matter how it is interpreted. If we stay together then together in the words of T. S. Eliot we may discover that "(we) shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time".²

² T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding", (Poem) p. 16.

Chapter 1

NO ROOM AT THE INN

____Part One____

1. Ruether: Expressions of Patriarchy

From time to time one is heard to say "it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all". The phrase is usually directed towards one who has been forsaken in matters of the heart. Today it is possible to make the same analogy between the Church authorities and its female members. Despite centuries of loyalty the Church authorities have forsaken their women often causing pain and outrage to the community at large. Almost always it is women who have been the losers having to pay for the sin of Eve time and again in a way that the male members have not had to account for the sin of Adam. It is uncanny to think that in the history of Christianity women have never held positions of authority at the higher levels of the Catholic hierarchy. As a result women have never had the opportunity to involve themselves in the decision making processes of the Church nor have they been allowed to share their talents, experiences or gifts for the betterment of the Institution. If women had had a forum from which to speak in the past a broad based communitarianism rather than a vertical hierarchicalism might now reign.

Yet, there are those women who have held fast to the Institution challenging the injustices so often meted out to their sex. Rosemary Radford Ruether has been one such woman. She has questioned the validity of the structure of the Catholic Church preferring to clamour for change from within. It is not necessary here to give a detailed account of the difficulties that women have suffered at the hands of the Church authorities either past or present. Nonetheless, a feminist critique will be applied to some of the existing traditions if a new and vital stage in the life of the Church is to be

embarked upon. Ruether offers a critical feminist perspective which is useful for this thesis on two counts. Firstly, she challenges the existing patriarchal tradition at its very roots by attempting to deal with those teachings which are detrimental to women. Secondly, Ruether in hoping to change the very nature of the structure, calls for a reshaping of the Institution itself. What happens in the process, however, is that certain vital differences emerge between Ruether's writings and the official teaching of the Church. As the first chapter progresses some of the more important differences will thus be examined.

Certain aspects of Ruether's theology will be used to discern some of the greater problems found in official Church teaching. For example, she challenges a decadent patriarchal heritage as destructive not only to the Church of the present but also to the Church of the future. Specifically, Ruether believes that hierarchical patriarchalism has wrongly interpreted the teachings of Christ. This interpretation, in turn, has been responsible for a sexism and dualism which has been rampant in the Church almost from the time of the Early Fathers. An unhealthy situation emerged which permitted a dichotomous viewpoint of heaven and earth, body and soul, matter and spirit and male and female. One of the results was a misogyny whose vestiges remain today evident in the exclusion of women from the ordained ministry. However, given that the task of this thesis is conciliatory, that is, it hopes to find *something commonplace* between the feminists of the Church and the Church authorities a *focus for mediation must be found*. The present chapter, therefore, will eventually suggest that there is enough evidence in ecclesio-centred Marian theology for the possible mutual agreement of both sides.

The Second Vatican Council provided the basis for such a belief. It will be shown below that an examination of its document on Mary of Nazareth contains elements of an ecclesiological approach to Marian theology which are similar to the Marian writings of

Rosemary Radford Ruether. However, the complexities are such that it would be impossible merely to outline the similarities and draw conclusions. The Marian tradition is ancient and hallowed within Catholicism and the tampering of the symbols and dogmas conceded by the authorities is not *officially* permissible to the Catholic theologian. Therefore, a case must be built up to show that while Mary still remains vital to the life of the Church she must be portrayed in a more realistic light than that of the past. For this reason the present thesis will draw up three different models from which to view Marian theology. These are known as the theotypical, christatypical and ecclesiastical approaches to Marian theology. A brief explanation will be offered on these approaches at the end of this chapter and a detailed examination of each of them will be developed in the subsequent chapters.

Patriarchal Heritage

According to Rosemary Radford Ruether¹ true liberation of humanity can only come about when patriarchy is critically examined and its false symbolisms have been exposed. Her basic assumption is that the teachings of the Church have been infected by patriarchy and these have been used to subjugate women. Ruether sees patriarchy as a time worn archaic tradition that continues to function and pervade every sector of every society today. In particular, patriarchy has monopolised theology to the exclusion of all other influences in Christianity and has crippled free thought and action for centuries. Theological enterprises such as liberation theology and feminist theology have been officially suppressed or placed in a secondary position time and again.²

¹ For convenience the name Ruether rather than Rosemary Radford Ruether will be used throughout the text. Also wherever quotations are cited in exclusive language this thesis will respect same in the interests of accuracy.

² R. Ruether, "Feminist Theology in the Academy", *ChrCris* 45/3 (1985), p. 57.

Two of the greatest evils of patriarchal theology consist in its one sided interpretation of the scriptures and tradition and its inherent sexism. In her book *Sexism and God Talk*³ Ruether criticises patriarchal anthropology for coming dangerously close to seeing women as the bearers of sin. It stresses woman's greater inclination for sin and her inferior spirituality. For this reason women can never truly represent the image of God in the same way as men can. Man's superior rationality and spirituality have given him the right to dominate woman in every sphere of life. The logical outcome is that woman is particularly prone to sin. Woman has to be treated with caution because her sin is infectious. Her subjugation is necessary at all times and for all time because she was responsible originally for its introduction into paradise.⁴

Patriarchy and Christology

Unfortunately patriarchy has interpreted the teachings of Christ from its own prejudicial anti-female enquiry. According to Ruether, Christianity inherited its misogynistic stance from the ethnic and religious background of the Judaism of two thousand years ago. The accepted order of the nomadic herding societies for the imaging of God was that of male monotheism. To a great extent this in turn prevented God from being imaged in any way other than male. The overwhelming number of accounts of a male God in the Hebrew scriptures flowed into the New Testament and then into classical Christian theology. God came to be seen as One whose revelations were for *His* sons and it was this class of humanity that He directly addressed. *His* sons became *His* responsible partners. In turn women had to relate to men in much the same way that men had to relate to God. This set up a God-male-female hierarchy in the Christian tradition.⁵ The

³ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, SCM, 1983.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-55.

outcome is that christology itself is the doctrine in the Christian tradition which has been most frequently used against women.⁶

Ruether points out that the anti-woman use of christology became clearest in the high scholasticism of St. Thomas Aquinas. For him the male is the normative of the human species. Since the male represents the fullness of the human potential the second sex by nature must be defective mentally, morally and physically. Woman is not only defective since the Fall but she is defective in the original nature of things. Her confinement to a subservient position in the social order proves that the incarnation of the *Logos* of God into the male form was not an accident of history. It was an ontological necessity. The wholeness of human truth is represented in the male who in turn must be seen as head of the woman. (The same idea is also to be found in the scriptures 1 Timothy 2:11-15). It follows, then, that woman cannot truly image Christ. This being the case women cannot represent headship either in society or in the Church.⁷

Writing on Ruether's christology Mary Hembrow Snyder points out that this male way of interpreting the created order of things uses Christianity to sacralise the existing systems of sexism, slavery and imperialism. Inevitably the lordship of Christ no longer liberated those who were most vulnerable in society such as women, slaves and conquered peoples. The dominators claimed that they derived their lordship from Christ himself and justified their behaviour as the norm for Christian living. The tradition of this understanding of christology continued in the Greek and Hellenist Jewish tradition. These patriarchal cultures developed the terms *Logos* and Christ with their androcentric bias resulting in a firm belief that if Christ is male then the God he images must also be

⁶ R. Ruether, *To Change the World*, p. 45.

⁷ *Ibid.*

male.⁸ This tradition which gave both terms an androcentric bias implied that divinity, rationality and sovereign power were all assumed to be male. God in turn was also assumed to be male. Ruether goes on to say that:

Since it was men that were assumed to be rational, and women less so or not at all, and men who exercised public power, normally denied to women, the male metaphor was seen as appropriate for God, while female metaphors for God came to be regarded as inappropriate and indeed 'pagan'. The Logos who reveals the 'Father', therefore, was presumed to be properly imaged as male, even though the Jewish Wisdom tradition had used the female metaphor, Sophia, for this same idea. The maleness of the historical Jesus undoubtedly reinforced this preference for male-identified metaphors, such as Logos and 'Son of God', over the female metaphor of Sophia.⁹

Therefore, Ruether has it that patriarchal interpretation is a betrayal of Christ by the Church. She insists that, Christians can become followers of Christ only when we know that we are primarily the descendants of those who betrayed Christ. The Church is the successor of the apostles who sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and denied him three times in the courtyard of the High Priest. Furthermore, the Church is the descendant of those who tried to get Jesus to use his miracles to display his authority and establish a realm of domination and power. So it continued through history. The Church repeatedly betrayed Jesus in its rearing up of new classes of princes and priests and of its justification of the subjugation of women, slaves and the poor. Ruether's language becomes uncompromisingly strong when she states that "(the) kingdom of Satan is thus doubly entrenched in history, since Satan now wears the robes of the Vicar of Christ and uses the cross of Jesus as his sceptre".¹⁰

⁸ M.H. Snyder, *The Christology of Rosemary Radford Ruether*, pp. 61-62.

⁹ R. Ruether, "Can Christology be Liberated from Patriarchy?" (Unpublished at p. 3).

¹⁰ R. Ruether, *To Change the World*, p. 24. See also, R. Ruether, "Spirituality and Justice: Popular Church Movements in the U.S.", *DChur*, pp. 189-206.

Sexism

One of the greatest evils of the patriarchal structure is the sin of sexism. Ruether maintains that a trivial attitude towards sexism has been adopted by both society and theology in general. Yet, it is a universal system of marginalisation of women which is constant within every culture at every class level. Sexism is a gender privilege of males over females and must be recognised as evil since it encourages a belief in the inferiority of the female.¹¹ Ruether would admit that a breach in the wall of sexist ideology is frightening to both men and women. Man, for his part, must stop imaging himself as the superior being but woman must also stop trading her humanity for dependent forms of security. Many women have diminished their humanity by failing to have the courage to fully admit that they have been deluded by its very vastness. As Ruether warns:

There can be no I-thou relationship where there is no authentic self that is allowed to stand over against and respond to another. What is called "relationship" is really an interdependence of masks and roles that is fundamentally pathological. Each side of the gender dualism depends on the other for what it lacks in itself. The man regresses to childhood dependence in those areas in which he depends on the woman to serve him. The woman is helpless in the public realm to which she is denied access and for which she lacks the skills of survival.¹²

One unfortunate by-product of sexism is that of dualism. Dualism polarises such pairs as body and soul, heaven and earth, male and female. Inevitably dualistic thought places a greater value on one member of the pair correspondingly subordinating its opposite member. A chain reaction is then set in train which systematically marginalises the *inferior* member. According to Ruether, society in turn accepts these negative events as the norm for life but the outcome is disastrous resulting in a process of alienation which permeates society at three different levels. Virtually, this means alienation from the self, alienation from one's fellows and alienation from the created world. It then

¹¹ R. Ruether, "The Interrelatedness of Oppression and efforts for Liberation: A Feminist Perspective", DT, 1985, p. 65.

¹² R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, pp. 173-175.

follows that the body becomes divided from the soul and is inferior to it; earth becomes inferior to heaven and is divided from it and the white middle class male becomes the model for humanity with his female counterpart becoming the inferior member. Any other way of looking at the world falls short of the divine plan of Creation.¹³

Ruether believes that an ironic situation has arisen as a result of these traditional sexist and dualistic patterns. Specifically the clergy find themselves unwittingly but physically and socially structured into the so-called feminine sphere of the modern world. They have now become the shadow side of those who are in the real world of work and business. These men who are the descendants of patriarchal misogyny are sometimes deemed as effeminate by society thus causing an identity crisis within the clerical ranks. Typically, the side effect becomes even more detrimental to the women of the Church. Its clerics, hoping to disassociate themselves from the label of the once feared and hated feminine, resist ever more strongly having women in the ordained ministry.¹⁴

Contraception and Homosexuality

The above outline does little more than to suggest that there are some important general differences between the Church and its feminists of whom Ruether has been chosen as a representative voice. Given this general background it is now appropriate to embark on selective examples of a more specific nature. Two of these are to be found in the contrast between Ruether's moral theology and that of the Church's. These areas are contraception and homosexuality. In a letter entitled, "Dear U.S Bishops you insult our intelligence",¹⁵ sent to all United States Catholic bishops, Ruether voices strong

¹³ K. Allen Rabuzzi, "The Socialist Feminist Vision of Rosemary Radford Ruether: A Challenge to Liberal Feminism", *RelStudR* 15/1 (1989), p. 6.

¹⁴ R. Ruether, "Male Clericalism and the Dread of Women", *ecumenist* 11/5 (1973), pp. 67-69.

¹⁵ R. Ruether, "Dear U.S. Bishops you insult our intelligence", *NCR*, 26/30 (1990), p. 16.

opinions. Her letter is a brief but sharp reply to the second draft of three Pastoral Letters written by American bishops in dialogue with women on women's issues.¹⁶

Ruether writes:

In the new draft of the pastoral letter on women, which your office has recently released, you call on the world to repent of sexism and to give to women that full equality of personhood which is their God-given nature. Your pastoral reaffirms every aspect of the patriarchal system that is the basis of sexism. Dear bishops, you embarrass us. You insult our intelligence.¹⁷

Ruether goes on in an uncompromising way to say how women are offended by this Pastoral. She states that although the bishops profess to be against abortion and for the life that gestates in a woman's womb their energies are weak when it comes to the defence of life after birth. While they find many ways to excuse those who stockpile weapons they crusade against contraception in clinics, schools and colleges. The following extract taken from the same letter to the bishops makes the point when she asks:

Do you not understand why more Catholic women get abortions in this country than Protestant women? Why Catholic countries such as Ireland, which criminalize abortion and make contraception inaccessible, send 30.000 women a year for abortions in England and uncounted numbers to the "home remedies" that endanger women's lives?¹⁸

However, Ruether must be questioned to some extent on the issues immediately above. While the Catholic Church has a fairly strong hold on the moral principles of its people in Ireland they cannot be held responsible for its civil legislation. A referendum on abortion was held in Ireland in 1983 where the people voted overwhelmingly against it.¹⁹ It might be argued that the people of Ireland are so influenced by the Catholic

¹⁶ NCCB, "One in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Response to the Concerns of Women for Church and Society", *Origins* 19/44 (1990), pp. 718-740.

¹⁷ R. Ruether, "Dear U.S. Bishops you insult our intelligence", *NCR* 26/30 (1990), p. 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* For more accurate statistics on Ireland and the abortion problem see A. Rynne, *Abortion the Irish Question*, pp. 19-25.

Church that they could not in conscience vote in any other way. Nonetheless, it is unlikely if one makes a comparison between attitudes to abortion and attitudes to contraception. The Church has been equally uncompromising in both areas but the people have made a choice and have chosen to ignore the teaching on contraception. The contraceptive business in Ireland is booming. Also in relation to contraception Ruether makes another inaccurate point. She says in her letter that contraception is inaccessible in Ireland. It is not. The contraceptive pill can be obtained on prescription by any doctor and the chemists have been selling other forms over the counter for many years.

Still on family planning one of the most controversial Encyclical Letters to have come out of Rome since the Second Vatican Council was that of *Humanae Vitae* written by Paul VI.²⁰ It is a document which deals with the transmission of human life and is well known for its teaching on contraception. Based on Natural Law this teaching prevails officially to the present day. The problematic paragraph runs as follows:

God has wisely ordered the laws of nature and the incidence of fertility in such a way that successive births are already naturally spaced through the inherent operation of these laws. The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches as absolutely required that in any use whatever of marriage there must be no impairment of its natural capacity to procreate human life.²¹

Ruether disagrees totally with a statement of this nature. She holds that the human person has the right to decide how his/her biological process should function. It should not be left to the laws of nature which, of course, the Church considers to be the law of God. Compare the difference between *Humanae Vitae* and that of Ruether's writing

²⁰ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, CTS, 1968.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Par. 11, p. 13.

given in her outline of a liturgical puberty rite for young women. During the process the young woman is supposed to recite the following:

Every month an egg is born and grows and makes ready for the creation of a new life. If I do not choose to create a new life, this egg falls away and is washed out of my body with the purifying blood. Then a new egg is born and grows, and so the cycle continues, the great cycle of the power of creation of which we are all a part. This great power of life lies in my hands. *I am responsible* for it. (My Italics)²²

Ruether reiterates that the woman is the one who must make decisions about when and whether she ought to become a mother. She insists that the woman must be in control of this wonderful life-making power of the body. It must not be used until the woman is ready to take the responsibility for the caring of another human life. The woman is the one who must make the decision when she is ready. She is the one who must decide when her body is ready for love and when it is not. She is the one who chooses when she is ready to create a new life and when she is not.²³

Homosexuality (lesbianism) is another area where the Church and Ruether part company. Church teaching on homosexuality is again based on its understanding of the Natural Law. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) make the Church's teaching on homosexuality clear. It draws a definite distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual activity. The orientation is that which is intrinsic to the nature of the person and the activity is any sexual act which would take place between two persons of the same sex. The teaching also takes note of the fact that there are two kinds of homosexuality. One, it is claimed, is a temporary condition and can be cured the second is a permanent condition and is *presumed to be incurable*.²⁴

²² R. Ruether, *Woman-Church*, p. 189.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana*, par. 8, p. 7. See also, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons". par. 3, p. 4. and par. 7, p. 6.

The Church insists that the pastoral care of homosexual persons should be considerate and kind. A hope should be instilled in them that someday they will be able to overcome their difficulties and their alienation from society. However, the Church will not allow any pastoral method or theory to provide moral justification for their actions. Furthermore, the Church will not accept that those with a homosexual condition can be justified in having sexual relations in the context of a genuine partnership for life like that of marriage. This, of course, commits them to a life of enforced celibacy should they not want to commit serious sin in the eyes of God. The language of the CDF at this point is quite uncompromising:

Sexual relations of persons of the same sex are necessarily and essentially disordered according to the objective moral order. Sacred scripture condemns them (sic) as gravely depraved and even portrays them as the tragic consequence of rejecting God. Of course, the judgement of sacred scripture does not imply that all who suffer from this deformity are by that very fact guilty of personal fault. But it does show that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and may never be approved in any way whatever.²⁵

Ruether, for her part, has a completely different way of looking at homosexuality and how it should be treated within the Church community. Again she has a liturgical celebratory rite which she refers to as the coming-out rite for a lesbian. She describes the rite as a celebration of new birth for one who wants to affirm her identity as a lesbian woman. This rite, which is of a baptismal nature, would also apply to women who have suppressed their true nature as homosexual for many years and now wish to return to the nature which is proper to them. Unlike the CDF Ruether sees this gift of sexuality as a gift from God/ess. For this reason thanks must be given to the *Author of all life* who created the universe and also thanksgiving for the women whose lives are being celebrated in this way.²⁶

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Par. 8, pp. 7-8.

²⁶ R. Ruether, *Woman-Church*, p. 173.

So far it is clear that Ruether has a completely different understanding of the right of the autonomy of the individual to that of the Church's. Where Ruether is concerned the decision making process with respect to the more private matters of one's personal life must come from within. Such decisions are not to be imposed by a set of exterior rules which have little or no bearing on the right of the individual to take responsibility for her/his own life. It is not difficult to agree with Ruether on these matters. For too long the Church has used its teachings, particularly on sexual morality to keep its members under control. While there are many times when its moral teachings are to the good there are other times when the regulations are so unyielding and restrictive as to be oppressive. Nowadays this is often the case. Much of what is taught today, particularly in the area of sexual morality, can be detrimental to the growth of Church members in general but most especially to women.

2. Patriarchal Consolidation

Ruether's dissatisfaction with the patriarchal structure of the Church does not end with the difficulties related to sexual morality. One of the most contentious issues in the Church in recent years, especially since the Second Vatican Council, has been the Church's intransigent stance on not allowing women access to the ordained ministry. So grave is the situation at this time that it warrants a short section of its own in this thesis. There can be little doubt that the question is a vexing one for at least three reasons. Firstly, there is a growing number of other Christian Churches with female members who preach and celebrate the Eucharist. Secondly, Catholics must decide for themselves if official Church teaching has not placed an obstacle against intercommunion with these other Churches who have chosen, often in the face of great anguish, to admit women to ordination. Thirdly, since the Second Vatican Council, a greater awareness of the role of women in non-ordained ministries has been encouraged. It has become all too obvious that while many of these women feel they

have a vocation to the priesthood few men are coming forward. This increasing understanding of the pastoral potentialities of women coupled with an awareness that past sacrosanct laws have been abandoned officially calls for more careful assessment on the part of everyone.

Church Ministry

The arguments against the ordination of women are condensed in the Church's official document *Inter Insigniores*.²⁷ The chief reasons given by the CDF are as follows: (a) the Church's desire to be faithful to tradition; (b) Jesus did not call women to be a part of the *Twelve*; (c) the priest acts *in persona Christi*. The latter point tends to be considered the most important and places a strong emphasis on the necessity of maleness for admittance to ordination.²⁸ Ruether would refute the first claim given her criticism of the patriarchal structure. She refutes the second one by pointing out that Jesus also only appointed Jews. Despite the fact that although Jewishness was important to the New Testament for the selection of the Twelve the Church quickly abandoned this norm.²⁹ Concerning the third claim Ruether goes on to say that the argument that Jesus was male and that only a male can represent Christ is not theologically acceptable. The traditional understanding of the Incarnation of Jesus was not that it happened through his maleness but that it took place through his humanity. Ruether recalls the patristic theologians on this matter when she points out that what is not assumed by the human nature of Christ is not saved. If the Incarnation had depended solely on the maleness of Jesus then woman could not have been saved. Hence, it is not the maleness of Christ that is essential but his generic human nature

²⁷ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter Insigniores*, CTS, 1976.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-16.

²⁹ R. Ruether, "Male Clericalism and the Dread of Women", *ecumenist* 11/5 (1973), p. 65.

which is both male and female.³⁰ Given the importance of the term *in persona Christi* greater account will be taken of it in a sub-section of its own below.

In the meantime some reference must be made to another type of priesthood. Within the tradition there has always been two types of priesthood. The priesthood of the ordained ministry and the priesthood of the laity. This idea was particularly emphasised during the Second Vatican Council which reads as follows:

In the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by his power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God. In the concrete, their apostolate is exercised when they work at the evangelization and sanctification of men; it is exercised too when they endeavor to have the Gospel spirit permeate and improve the temporal order, going about it in a way that bears clear witness to Christ and helps forward the salvation of men.³¹

Unfortunately this fine sounding statement is somewhat misleading. Piero Antonio Bonnet describes the distinction intended by saying that the ministerial priesthood, on the one hand, is a hierarchical power which is required for the dispensing of the sacraments. The common priesthood or the priesthood of the laity, on the other hand, is permitted to perform only lesser tasks. The priesthood of the laity, therefore, is auxiliary to the ministerial priesthood.³² The Council itself states that both priesthoods

³⁰ *Ibid.* Theologian Mary Rousseau, on the other hand, argues in favour of maleness for the priesthood based on the principle that physical appearance alone does not constitute maleness. The priest must have masculine love in his heart which springs from his sexual identity. This sexual identity pervades his person since it is marked by male chemistry and neurology, male perception, judgement and choice. Naturally enough masculine sexual identity is not possible to someone who is female. Thus, Rousseau maintains that women cannot be priests for the same reason that they cannot be grandfathers, uncles or husbands. Even if a bishop were to pronounce the words of ordination over a woman the sacramental reality would be void. M. Rousseau, "Pope John Paul's Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women: the call to Communio", *Com XVI/2* (1989), p. 230.

³¹ Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, Par. 2, p. 768.

³² P. Bonnet, "Those with no mandate in the Church", *Conc 197/3* (1988), p. 118.

differ not only essentially but also in degree.³³ The Council's intention is borne out by Desmond Connell, Archbishop of Dublin, when he claims that as "Christ's priesthood excels the priesthood of the Church, so the priesthood of the ordained priest excels the common priesthood of the faithful".³⁴ The difference between the two types of priesthood for Connell is a fundamental one linked to the mystery of the Eucharist. Since Christ's offering and the Church's offering during the celebration of the Eucharist are one the Church is enabled to transcend herself in the ordained priest only by virtue of the Sacrament of Orders. The sacramental action which takes place at the Eucharist could not take place through the laity simply because they are not ordained.³⁵

It is clear that Ruether would have great difficulties with these two types of ministry. Fundamentally she disagrees with the dualism inherent in the structure for she explains that throughout history there has been two quite different concepts of Church. One is the Church as *historical institution* and the other is the Church as *spirit filled community*. The former takes the established social order and sacralises it. The latter, for its part, is a radical Christianity which sets itself in tension not only with the institutional Church but also with the established society. Ruether explains that the Church reflects the societies within which it lives and models itself on them. Examples include the ruling classes of imperial Rome over the plebeians, the nobility over the peasantry in the Middle Ages and today the managerial class over the consumer, male over female and father over children. It is, thus, easy to draw the parallel in the Institution between clergy and laity. Ruether's vision of Church as spirit filled community, instead, makes room for everyone to minister to one another. The Church as spirit-filled community tries to break down these hierarchical structures giving the

³³ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, Par. 10, p. 361.

³⁴ D. Connell, "Women Priests: Why Not?", TChur, p. 210.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

gifts of the Spirit free reign. In this way the Body of Christ as redeemed humanity works for the despised of this world through its teaching and prophecy. In turn this will mean that women will be emancipated and given equal place where they will contribute to the forming of a more holistic community.³⁶

Excluding Women

The situation which exists in the Church today between an understanding of the Church as sacramental priesthood and the Church as spirit-filled community is unacceptably divisive for the Church as a whole. Such divisiveness alienates women particularly since the *Magisterium* makes it impossible for a woman to answer a call by the Spirit to follow through a vocation to ordination. The external teaching of the *Magisterium* attempts to appropriate the Spirit to the extent that women are told they are incapable of having a vocation of this kind. They deny the possibility that the Spirit might call a woman to ordained ministry. The *Magisterium* states that a woman who claims she has such a calling feels nothing more than a mere *attraction* to that particular way of life. While they accept the fact that a woman's motives may be noble the *Magisterium* reiterates that a vocation can never be reduced to mere personal attraction. This teaching body goes on to say that "(since) the priesthood is a particular ministry of which the Church has received the charge and the control, authentication by the Church is indispensable here and a constitutive part of the vocation".³⁷

It is small wonder then that feminist theologians like Mary Daly write in anger about the lack of balance in the sacrament of Holy Orders which exalts the status of the priest and not his mission to serve. Rather scathingly she points out that:

³⁶ R. Ruether, *Women-Church*, pp. 22-23.

³⁷ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter Insigniores*, p. 17.

One is tempted to conclude, upon reading some theological treatises, that there is a kind of phallic symbolism involved in the exaggerated emphasis upon the dignity of the priest. This has been especially in evidence when the question of the ordination of women has been raised.³⁸

The sacrament of Holy Orders, then, elevates the dignity of the man who espouses it but that same dignity is not to be found in the laity in general and women in particular. Ruether is too well aware of the difficulties caused by the sacramental priesthood and what it means for women. She fears that there is no real possibility of partnership between the laity and those who are the decision makers in the Church. The most the Church offers since the Second Vatican Council are positions which exclude the laity from a voice in decision making. Offices such as ministers of the Eucharist and readers in the Church are auxiliary services whose functions and responsibilities last as long as a liturgical Service. The ordained ministry, on the other hand, is a life long commitment for those within it and permanently closed to those without. This is all the more poignant when one recalls from the previous section that women cannot enter the ministry because they do not resemble the man Jesus in physical appearance.³⁹

In Persona Christi

That women cannot resemble Christ in physical appearance is the greatest weapon the Church uses in its official teaching to debar women. One of the most deeply rooted symbolic structures in the Church is its teaching based on the Latin term *in persona Christi*. The Church uses the term to argue that only men can represent Christ at the Eucharist. The CDF states its case in its document on women priests:

the priest, who alone has the power to perform it, (i.e. the Eucharist) then acts only through the effective power conferred on him by Christ, but *in persona Christi*, taking the role of Christ, to the point of being *his*

³⁸ M. Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, p. 145.

³⁹ R. Ruether, "Catholic Bishops and Women's Concerns", *ChrCris* (1988), pp. 175-176.

very image (emphasis added) when he announces the words of consecration.⁴⁰

The document goes on to say that the faithful must be able to recognise easily that *natural resemblance* which exists between Christ and his priest. If the priest were female, on the other hand, it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ.⁴¹ According to this viewpoint it is the physical appearance of the male species which is prioritised. The institution of an all male priesthood has its explanation rooted in Christ's very maleness of which man is the more accurate symbol. However, for many in the Church today this is hardly anything short of sexual discrimination. Nowadays it is commonplace for the *Magisterium* to use the problematic symbol but according to Kenneth Untener, Bishop of Saginaw, the term is relatively new in official Church usage. Furthermore, it has evolved in this way from an incorrect translation by Jerome. Untener, claims that the phrase, used apparently only once in the New Testament, is based on a faulty rendering of the original Greek. In 2 Corinthians 2:10 Paul writes "(what) I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the *presence* of Christ". (My italics) Jerome translated this into the Latin wrongly substituting the word person for the word *presence*.⁴²

In the intervening years the phrase was seldom used until it was taken up by Pius XI in the present century. He proclaims that "Christ is present at the august sacrifice of the altar both in the person of His minister and above all under the Eucharistic species".⁴³ No reference is given. Yet, here is the beginning of the use of the phrase in *persona Christi* as theologically acceptable. The Second Vatican Council, for its part, makes use

⁴⁰ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter Insigniores*, pp. 12-13.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴² K. Untener, "Forum: The Ordination of Women. Can Horizons Widen?", *Worship* 65/1 (1991), p. 53.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

of the phrase five times in explicit reference to the ordained priesthood.⁴⁴ Notably, the practice of using the term without giving any kind of reference is increasing. After the Council the phrase becomes ever more popular. Untener's research shows that it is used in the writings of Paul VI, in the 1970 General Instruction on the Missal, and in the 1971 Synod of Bishops. The CDF began to use it in 1973 and has frequently continued to do so as does the present Pope.⁴⁵

It is now clear that a phrase used infrequently for nineteen centuries becomes standard theological terminology in contemporary times with very little exegetical examination. This is not acceptable. If Christ has united himself to the whole of human nature one must ask why only a man is allowed to take this representative role. As Carolyn Osiek remarks, "(to) say that Christ cannot be imaged as a woman is to say that woman cannot image Christ-this time not only as a priest, but not even as the crucified".⁴⁶

Stumbling Block

What is even more distressing is that in recent dialogue between women and the Church the bishops of America still hold on to the same arguments which were found in the official document *Inter Insigniores* which was written in 1976. Between 1988 and 1992 the American bishops sat in dialogue with women and female theologians from all over the country.⁴⁷ While many advances were made the greatest stumbling block was the problem of the Church's exclusion of women from the ordained ministry. The

⁴⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, Par. 33, p. 12.

⁴⁵ K. Utener, "Forum: The Ordination of Women. Can Horizons Widen?", *Worship* 65/1 (1991), pp. 55-59.

⁴⁶ C. Osiek, *Beyond Anger*, p. 71.

⁴⁷ NCCB, "Partners in the Mystery of Redemption", *Origins* 17/45 (1988), pp. 758-788; "One in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Response to the Concerns of Women in the Church and Society", *Origins* 19/44 (1990), pp. 718-740; "Called to be One in Christ Jesus", *Origins* 21/46 (1992), pp. 763-775 and "One in Christ Jesus", *Origins* 22/29 (1992), pp. 489-507.

American bishops (otherwise known as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops or NCCB) simply reiterate that there is an unbroken tradition in the Church which witnesses to the mind of Christ.⁴⁸ The Church in its turn does not feel free to part from that tradition in this matter. The bishops quote *Inter Insigniores* when they say that "the church, in fidelity to the example of the Lord, does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination".⁴⁹

The second draft of the bishops' Conference with women in dialogue in 1990 still defended the ban on women's ordination promulgated by Rome in 1976 (*Inter Insigniores*).⁵⁰ The third draft written in 1992 sees no advance in the matter since it appeals to the 1976 document as a reference point. The NCCB again side-steps the issue by placing emphasis on the common priesthood of the laity. There is one significant advance, and that is, that the NCCB states the need for continuing dialogue and reflection on the meaning of ministry in the Church. However, while there is an implication that the *ministry* referred to is the ministerial priesthood this is not specifically stated.⁵¹ An attempt at a fourth draft has succeeded in producing a division within the ranks of the NCCB itself with a failure to gain a two thirds majority to pass the document as a whole. The greatest bone of contention is still the vexed question of women's ordination.⁵² (More will be said of this Conference and its dialogue with women in chapter four).

⁴⁸ NCCB, "Partners in the Mystery of Redemption", *Origins* 17/45 (1988), p. 781.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ NCCB, "One in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Response to the Concerns of Women in the Church and Society", *Origins* 19/44 (1990), pp. 729-730.

⁵¹ NCCB, "Called to be One in Jesus Christ", *Origins* 21/46 (1992), p. 772.

⁵² NCCB, "One in Jesus Christ", *Origins* 22/29 (1992), pp. 490-508.

The reiteration of these same arguments time and again sound rather feeble in documents which are supposed to be devoted to transformation and progress.⁵³ Ruether strongly reacts to any of the arguments put forward by the official Church with regard to their stance on the exclusion of women to the priesthood. She outlines some of her difficulties in an article entitled "Ordination: What is the Problem?".⁵⁴ Again she goes back to the old problem of patriarchy which in Judaism and Christianity excluded women from public professional life on the basis of their natural inferiority. She also criticises the religious doctrine which is set up by the official Church to justify its teachings which names the order of God's creation as reason enough to maintain the *status quo*. The only way these structures can be changed, according to Ruether, is to turn again to the gospels.⁵⁵

The differences between Ruether and official Church teaching in this regard would be difficult to resolve particularly as the Institution has its own way of interpreting the scriptures through the authority of the *Magisterium*. Ruether does not accept the claim of the *Magisterium* that they have the authority of Christ in all religious and moral matters. Ruether believes that the appeal of the *Magisterium* to the authority of Christ and tradition is not tenable. She asks what right do they have to set themselves up as exclusive possessors of the power to ordain? If the bishops return to the scriptures to verify their authority so does Ruether in order to verify her argument. She says that historically speaking no such offices were established by Jesus. She insists that all

⁵³ The arguments against the exclusion of women to the ministry are numerous. One of the strongest is to be found in the Church's own Pontifical Biblical Commission. In April 1976 the Commission was asked to research the New Testament to find out whether or not there was enough evidence to allow for women's ordination. There was a 12/5 vote to say that the question could not be settled on scriptural grounds alone. Furthermore, there was also a 12/5 vote to say that if women were allowed to be ordained this would not transgress the plan of Christ. The Commission's report in 1976 was not an official document but this information was leaked. Nevertheless, great secrecy surrounded the findings. Shortly afterwards *Inter Insigniores* appeared as the official document on women priests and the Commission's report was not heard of again. For a full account see, J. Donahue, "A Tale of Two Documents", WP, Paulist Press, pp. 30-34.

⁵⁴ R. Ruether, "Ordination: What is the Problem?", WCP, pp. 30-34.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

ministry, the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of the laity, must be regarded as the historical creations of the Church.⁵⁶

Ruether's Church would be very different to the one we have now particularly with regard to ministerial practices. Her point of view comes from her belief that the Church created the ministries and not the other way around. She believes that any Christian community gathered together has the power to designate particular persons to represent it in the sacramental actions of the Church. The first stage for women is to demystify themselves of the belief that priests possess a sacramental power which the rest of the community does not possess. As she says:

The sacramental power of the priest is nothing else but the sacramental expression of the life of the community itself in Christ, which the community itself has designated him or her to express for, and to, the community. The alienation of sacramental life as a power tool to be used over and against the community is the basis of all false clericalism; such clericalism is deeply rooted in sexist symbols of domination and passivity. Women cannot ask to be ordained without questioning fundamentally this concept of clericalism.⁵⁷

Ruether would not do away with priests and bishops altogether. She believes that the Church, as community, should designate particular persons for the sacramental life and mandate the specific educational and spiritual qualifications required for such ministries. Priests and bishops for their part are to be the representatives of the life and power of the Church not the masters who alienate the community and reduce it to subservience.⁵⁸ Ruether no longer wants to see a male dominance which claims to act for Christ and the Church. All Christians male and female must come to see with horror

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

and disgust the male dominance which has kept the people of God from advancement for so long.⁵⁹

3. The Institution Revisited

Looking back over the above sections so far it would appear that Rosemary Ruether and the institutional Church have little in common in their respective theologies. There are no obvious links of any great significance in the midst of these differences. This is especially the case in relation to the exclusion of women to the ordained priesthood. Despite learned arguments such as Ruether's in refutation of official teaching the Church has remained stubbornly dogmatic on this matter. The earlier mentioned differences especially in moral theology are so marked that the gap between a feminist thinker of Ruether's calibre and official Church teaching seems too wide to be bridged. It was shown that the greatest barrier to any kind of unity is the patriarchal structure out of which the Church works.

However, now it is time to seek some kind of general convergence between the two theologies. Ultimately Ruether is a Christian feminist who works within the Institution and remains there because of her faith in the teachings of Christ. The Church authorities also have the same faith. On the other hand, a number of feminist theologians have not been able to reconcile Christianity with patriarchy and its attendant problems. Mary Daly (once Roman Catholic) and Daphne Hampson (once Scottish Episcopalian) are two of the classic examples of modern times. It will now be shown that Ruether, unlike these two women, would have much more in common with the institutional Church in one very important respect. That is, her willingness to retain her Christian identity by remaining within the Institution while at the same time proclaiming the teachings of Christ.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Remaining Within

Daly, for her part, believes that the portrayal of Christ as a saviour of women is a waste of time because of the emphasis on the maleness of Jesus. She refers to the worship of Jesus as tantamount to christolatry.⁶⁰ For Daly and women who think as she does there is no getting around the fact that Jesus was a male and that the dominant images of the Christian God are male. Inherently these male symbols are no longer able to help alienated women because they have functioned so effectively in history to legitimate their subordination. A response to such a view might be gleaned from the work of the Irish theologian Dermot Lane. He would claim that the maleness of Jesus is not what counts. Rather, it is important to have an understanding of the *Christ-Event* and the Christian message itself.

According to Lane, the *Christ-Event* is made up of two types of theological data. One concerns the historical experience of the man Jesus of Nazareth and the other tells of Jesus as the visitation of God to humanity.⁶¹ Included in the meaning of the *Christ-Event* is the understanding that the Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of Faith are summed up in the simple term *Jesus the Christ* or more commonly Jesus Christ. However, Lane notes that a liberty has been taken by dropping the definite article. It is a rather unfortunate turn of events for there have been times when an improper understanding between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith has manifested itself in the tradition.⁶² Nowhere is this more obvious than in the Church's patriarchalisation of Christ. One way of solving the problem is to recognise that relationship between the man Jesus and God as an incomprehensible one. Lane writing again many years later points out that:

⁶⁰ M.Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, pp. 13-63, 44-68, 69-71.

⁶¹ D. Lane, *The Reality of Jesus*, p. 10.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Even the revelation of God in Jesus, which ultimately issues in the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, is subject to a recognition of the incomprehensibility of God, that is, the God revealed in Jesus continues to be the God who 'dwells in light unapproachable' (1 Tm 6:16) and 'whose judgments are unsearchable and ways inscrutable' (Rm 11:33).⁶³

The point being made here is that Jesus the Christ as saviour is as incomprehensible as God and like God cannot be imprisoned exclusively in male imagery. It might be argued that just as there is no adequate image, mystery or theory to explain the mystery of God, there is no adequate image, mystery or theory to explain the mystery of Christ. All Christians must recognise and believe in both. However, Lane's explanation would not satisfy post-Christian feminists. Not only would they not accept the mystery of the *Christ-Event* but they would not even see the point of Christ's message of the Good News. As Daphne Hampson, for example, sees it the message circumvents the real problem since the male personhood of Jesus is still the central symbol for the institutional Church. Besides, she wonders what is the point of a message anyway? Anyone can live the message of Jesus without having to be a Christian and anyone can live independently of the person who holds it. Hampson cites Gandhi as one example of a non-Christian who found the message of Jesus striking but held a humanist view.⁶⁴

It is significant here that Hampson then goes on to critique Ruether because of Ruether's attachment to the Christian message. Given the earlier synopsis of Ruether's difficulties with patriarchy one might be forgiven for thinking that Ruether was also a post-Christian feminist. Paradoxically, Hampson's criticism of Ruether is evidence of Ruether's true beliefs. Hampson remarks that Ruether is most interested with that part of Jesus's message which concerns the coming of the Reign of God, the vindication of

⁶³ D. Lane, *Christ at the Centre*, p. 42.

⁶⁴ D. Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, p. 64.

the poor and the concern for a just social order. The centre of this theology is the Christian vision. Among those who are the poorest of the poor are women but Hampson asks why this should be seen as a christology? If all Ruether wishes to speak of is a message and a vision then there is no reason to use the medium of Christianity. Humanists and Marxists also have a Christian vision or at least they might well have drawn on Christianity and incorporated some of it into their own ideals.⁶⁵

Ruether counters this point and asks under the same circumstances if it is possible for a male saviour to save women. Her categorical answer is that he can. She believes that just as liberation theologians return to the synoptic gospels to find the real Jesus so can the women of the Church for the same reason. (This theme will be developed in the fourth chapter of the present thesis). Here a Jesus will be found who does not sacralise the ruling classes. Here is the messianic prophet who proclaims his message against the existing elites of the day, particularly the religious elites. What is to be found in the gospels is a prolonged conflict between Christ and those religious authorities who are at the centre of patriarchal righteousness.⁶⁶ Ruether has a very rich christology and believes that the person of Jesus of Nazareth may be used as a "positive model of redemptive humanity".⁶⁷

Therefore, unlike Daly and Hampson Ruether is not interested in total discontinuity with the past as regards Christianity. It does not have to be lost or repudiated in order to build a new future. Christianity can be experienced from women's perspectives in ways that had not been previously allowed in a tradition biased by patriarchy. Ruether wishes to create a new feminist *midrash* and align it to the traditional Christian story so that

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

⁶⁶ R. Ruether, *To Change the World*, pp. 47-53.

⁶⁷ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, p. 114.

Christianity will become transformative once again. Without wishing to repudiate the old stories she holds on to a belief in the liberating Christ. In this respect Ruether seeks to encounter:

the liberating Christ in the form of our sisters, those sisters who have been the historic victims of patriarchy and who also have continually struggled against it.⁶⁸

The liberating Christ of Ruether includes both the *Christ-Event* and the message of Jesus. However, the liberating message of Jesus as the Christ will only take effect if women's experience counts as a key to hermeneutics. Women should not turn away from Jesus and the Christian message as Daly and Hampson have done. Instead, they should become ever more aware of the alienating experiences imposed upon them by the patriarchal interpretation of a male dominated culture.⁶⁹ The revealer of the liberating symbolism of christology is none other than the man Jesus. For Ruether, Jesus was a true feminist. He had close women friends and women disciples who, unlike many of his male disciples, accompanied him to the end.⁷⁰

The basic tenet of Ruether's argument here is that a male saviour can save women. In this regard she is in stark contrast to her contemporaries, Daly and Hampson, who have left their respective Churches. Daly is particularly vociferous in her belief that a male saviour cannot save woman.⁷¹ Ruether, for her part, remains within her Church regardless of the serious difficulties she encounters with much of its teaching and structures. Ruether does not believe that post-Christian feminism is the way forward and makes this clear in a critique of Hampson's theology. While Hampson believes that Christianity is unreformable due to the process of patriarchalisation Ruether, on the

⁶⁸ R. Ruether, "For Whom, do we speak our new stories?", *ChrCris* 45/8 (1985), pp. 183-186.

⁶⁹ R. Ruether, "Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation", *FIB*, pp. 111-124.

⁷⁰ R. Ruether, *New Woman New Earth*, pp. 63-66.

⁷¹ M. Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, Beacon Press, 1973.

other hand, maintains that Christianity has been capable of reform throughout history. It has been able to reinterpret itself continually in response to new scientific knowledge and certain social exigencies because it is a living community in time and space. Ruether compares Christianity, and its agent, the Church, to a living person who continually re-evaluates its history and revises what it remembers. Hampson, on the other hand, believes Christianity to be dead.⁷²

Finally, Ruether criticises Hampson herself for being patriarchal. Ruether's criticism comes from the fact that Hampson no longer wants to take responsibility for helping the Christian community to live. She compares Hampson to an emigrant who not only has left the country of her/his birth but has tried to persuade those left behind that they are foolish to remain. This is not to say that Ruether has any difficulties with Hampson (or the emigrant) for opting out. After all, there is no greater critic than Ruether of the patriarchal system. However, she opposes Hampson for absolutising and universalising her option and then rejecting the principles of those who remain in order to make changes from the inside.⁷³

As for Ruether, the reason she has remained within the Church is to make changes from within. While her criticism of the patriarchal Church is often sharp and uncompromising she believes that a feminist canon can and should be developed. Christian feminists, for their part, should use everything from the tradition that can be used and anything that is restrictive or patriarchal should be weeded out. It is at this juncture that Ruether's belief in institutionalised religion is exemplary for those feminists who do not wish to abandon the Catholic Church. The building of the Reign of God on earth is the practical task of the Church community. Ruether's desire to

⁷² R. Ruether, "Is Feminism the end of Christianity? A Critique of Daphne Hamson's Theology and Feminism", *ScotJournTheol* 43 (1990), pp. 390-400.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 391-400.

make better use of its existing traditions in this respect offers hope to those Christian feminists who seek ecclesiastical transformation. Furthermore, it would be unwise to think that many of the bishops and priests of the world do not abhor the patriarchal structure within which they themselves work. Major attempts to bring about change and create a better future began with the work of the Second Vatican Council in the years 1962-1965.

Second Vatican Council: A Watershed

Many of the reforms of the Council are evident in Church teaching and practice today. The Council itself was about change and the de-centralisation of power from the hands of the Pope and those in the upper echelons of the Church. Ruether has held out great hopes for the Church since the Second Vatican Council. It could be said that if it had not been for the Council Ruether would have probably left the Church long ago. In an article written after the Council Ruether's hope is obvious. She believes that the new consciousness which was released by the Council cannot be expelled. No longer would it be possible for a small but unchanged Roman sect to continue as before. The efforts at the Council were genuine and far superior to anything attempted previously in the line of change. While the Church was still authoritative at the time of the Council, it was nonetheless, prophetic.⁷⁴

So what was it about the Council that gave Ruether so much hope? A plethora of material has been written about it in the years since its opening. A brief summary offered by Oliver Treanor is enough to state the case. Treanor's outline shows that there are three characteristics which differentiate the Council's sixteen documents from earlier statements in the tradition. Primarily, the Second Vatican Council saw itself as a pastoral Council. This was a novel idea in the Church. For the first time we have a

⁷⁴ R. Ruether, "Continuing Reform after Vatican II", TMonth (1973), p. 95.

Church Council which was set up not to react polemically against "heresies" but simply to minister to those living in the twentieth century. Secondly, the Council was consciously christological in its approach and thirdly, it was specifically ecclesiological.⁷⁵

The christological/ecclesiological approaches of the Council are of specific importance to this thesis because they are the core from which another theology will emanate. That is, Mariology or Marian theology by which the discipline is better known in contemporary times. It is here, within a new Marian ecclesial focus, that common elements are discovered between Christian feminism and the official teaching of the Catholic Church. Significantly, it is Ruether's ecclesiological approach to Marian theology which hints at the possible mediation point. The word *hints* has been decidedly chosen because Ruether is not a Marian theologian of any known standing. Her work as a general rule is not in the area of Marian theology but her Marian ideas are vitally important. While a strong emphasis was placed in Ruether's willingness to remain within the Institution on christological grounds (and this emphasis will occur again in chapter four) the main contention here is that Ruether's strongest link with the official teaching of the Church is in her ecclesiological approach to Marian theology.

The tracing of a mediation point between Christian feminism and the Church will require a double tiered approach. That is, one which concentrates on traditional Church teaching and one which concentrates on a Christian feminist approach, in this case, Ruether's. For this reason it will be necessary to move away from Ruether until the third chapter of this paper. The remainder of this chapter will focus on various aspects of the Church's approach to Marian theology at the time of the Council. (The next chapter, in turn, will outline a tradition which has built up around Marian theology

⁷⁵ O. Treanor, *Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of the Redeemed*, p. 14.

throughout the centuries). In the meantime reference to the Second Vatican Council's decree on ecumenism will show that the desire for ecumenism triggered the all important change in the Church's approach to Marian theology.

Second Vatican Council: A Marian Balance

The relationship between the Council and its desire for ecumenism is significant. One of the Council's responses to the twentieth century was to admit of the divisions between the Churches without criticising the non-Roman Churches as *breakaways*. Such post-Reformation ideas are far from the Catholic Church's mind. This is clear from the Council's introductory statement on ecumenism:

The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true followers of the Lord but they differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ himself were divided. Certainly, such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature. The Lord of Ages nevertheless wisely and patiently follows out the plan of his grace on our behalf, sinners that we are. In recent times he has begun to bestow more generously upon divided Christian remorse over their division and longing for unity.⁷⁶

At all costs the Council was determined to move forward with its decree on ecumenism. Nowhere was this more obvious than in its re-evaluation on the Church's teaching on Mary. The topic of Mary has been one of the areas which has made it difficult traditionally for Protestants and Catholics to come together. For this reason (among others) the Second Vatican Council had to re-think its Marian theology, particularly if its

⁷⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis redintegratio*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, Par. 1, p. 452. Compare this to an Irish introduction to Pius IX's *Ineffabilis Deus* written in 1868 which was a Marian document. It should be noted that the following introduction was *not* written by the Pope himself but by an editor. Nonetheless, it gives an impression of what people thought of those outside the Church at the time. In reference to the relationship between Mary and Jesus the piece reads as follows: "On this account how unphilosophical, how false, how much opposed to the dignity of Jesus, how base, how vile-nay, how foul, fiendish, and springing from hell itself is the picture which Protestants and all heretics give of our Blessed Lady and glorious Immaculate Mother". U. Bourke, *The Bull "Ineffabilis"*, p. X.

hopes for the decree on ecumenism were to work. The preconciliar atmosphere of rigid non-dialogue on this matter was slowly relaxed on Marian matters while authentic dialogue in shared research took its place. Encouragingly, the World Council of Churches held a meeting in Nairobi in 1975 to consider the place of Mary in the their scheme of things. In subsequent years, many theologians from different Churches have come together to work out joint declarations.⁷⁷

On the Catholic side a great effort has been made since the Council to steer clear of any devotionism which might be likely to draw a parallel between Mary and Christ. Paul VI, for example, came up with an approach which downplayed the raw devotionism of the preconciliar days. The following statement is taken from the first official document written on Mary since the Council ended:

For Catholics, devotion to the Mother of Christ and Mother of Christians is also a natural and frequent opportunity for seeking her intercession with her Son in order to obtain the union of all the baptized with a single People of God. Yet again, the ecumenical aspect of Marian devotion is shown in the Catholic Church's desire that, without in any way detracting from the unique character of this devotion, every care should be taken to avoid any exaggeration which could mislead other Christian brethren about the true doctrine of the Catholic Church. Similarly the Church desires that any manifestation of cult which is opposed to correct Catholic practice should be eliminated.⁷⁸

The Protestant tradition, for its part, also has made efforts to work on a Marian theology that might be acceptable to both sides. Jurgen Moltmann in a frank editorial writes that the respective Churches must dig deeper if there is to be an ecumenically compelling Marian theology. Moltmann reminds the reader that looking back in history Marian devotion has had a divisive rather than a unitive effect. The more the Marian superstructure has been developed the more divisive it has been for the relationship

⁷⁷ S. de Fiores, "Mary in Postconciliar Theology", *Assess1*, p. 489.

⁷⁸ Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, par. 32, p. 57.

between Catholics and non-Catholics.⁷⁹ Yet, he sets about drawing up positive conditions for an ecumenical Marian theology although this is laced with the opinion that ecumenical unity is by no means certain in this area.⁸⁰

Moltmann would see a viable ecumenical Marian theology if three criteria were met. Firstly, the source and standard of Marian theology must be found in the biblical witness to Miriam, the Mother of Jesus. Secondly, Marian theology must serve christology neither detracting from it nor becoming emancipated from it. Thirdly, Moltmann believes that a biblically-based and christocentric Marian theology "will express the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the destiny of Christ and of Christians".⁸¹ The Catholic Church has attempted in its official teaching to work on all of these criteria from the time of the Second Vatican Council up until the present day. Paul VI's *Marialis Cultus* is just one example of the Church's attempt to balance its teaching on Mary while at the same time it includes all of Moltmann's criteria.⁸² (More will be said of this in chapter four).

Unfortunately, while there can be no doubt that the Second Vatican Council was the watershed for new ecumenical insights the pain of the new birth was particularly dramatic for Marian theology. It is a well known fact that the Council was divided in its opinion about Mary's role in the Church. The background to the difference of opinion centred around Chapter 8 of the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium*.⁸³ From its preparatory phase in 1962 until its final text in 1964 the document

⁷⁹ J. Moltmann, "Can there be an Ecumenical Mariology?", Conc 168 (1983), p. XII.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. XIV.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. XV.

⁸² Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, Par. 25, p. 44.

⁸³ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, pars. 52-69, pp. 413-423.

went through sixteen revisions. The final vote taken in St. Peter's was the closest vote to have been taken in the Council on any matter. It was about whether or not to include a chapter on Mary in this particular Constitution or to make up a separate schema for her.⁸⁴

It was at the Council that Mary became the subject of controversial debate. The difficulty is reflected in the language used at the time of the Council to describe the two different positions assumed by the adversaries. One was known as the *maximalist* position the other was known as the *minimalist*. The maximalist position tended to place more emphasis on the old traditional interpretations of scripture, apparitions and seeking out new feasts and devotions to Mary. The minimalists, on the other hand, were opposed to an over-emphasis on Marian theology and devotionism in the interests of ecumenism. Most of the Fathers at the Council could be categorised into maintaining one or other of these viewpoints. They were only catchphrases but they pointed to the different theological points of view on Marian theology at the time. Anne Carr expresses the problem in the following way:

...one who was "maximalist" was understood to be less theologically rigorous, especially in favoring a separate council document devoted to Mary alone that, from the side of the opponents, represented a detachment of the discussion of Mariology-a certain independence-from the rest of theology. One who was "minimalist", on the other hand, could be reproached for having little love for Mary, of being so ecumenically sensitive to the feelings of the Protestants (disturbed by what appeared to be near equation of Mary with Jesus Christ) that they were willing to sacrifice Catholic doctrine for the cause of Church union.⁸⁵

Loosely translated it can be stated that the controversy revolved around the desire to give Mary christological status, on the one hand, or to give her ecclesiological status on

⁸⁴ A. Carr, "Mary in the Mystery of the Church: Vatican Council II", MAW, p. 10.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

the other. Those who were in favour of giving Mary christological status would have preferred to see her get a document on her own (i.e. the maximalists). Those who favoured ecclesiological status were concerned to have Mary take her place within the document on the Constitution of the Church (i.e. the minimalists). A compromise had to be reached. Many bishops at the Council fought hard to uphold the christological aspect while others, for example, like Cardinal Santos of Manila, did not want to see Marian theology being reduced to ecclesiology. Cardinal Santos was opposed to Cardinal Koenig of Vienna who argued that the present trend in theology was *to link Mary and the Church* by using both scriptural and patristic resources in a way that was acceptable to both Protestant and eastern Christian theologies.⁸⁶

There was a real fear that the Marian issue would split the Council at the time. Five different documents on Mary were circulated and rumours of heresy were being printed in the popular press. Michael Novak who wrote a book on the proceedings of the Council at the time reported that the week before the vote on Mary was taken was the "blackest week of the Council"...and..."The winds of forward motion had dropped, and storms were forming in the dark".⁸⁷ Given the serious possibility of a split the Council could not drop its christological emphasis in favour of an ecclesiological one although the winds of change would have favoured the latter. Eventually a decision was taken. The two proposals were embodied in the document side by side. Articles fifty five to fifty nine had a christological focus and articles sixty to sixty five had an ecclesiological one. In addition, with a vote of 1,114 to 1,074 the Council decided not to have a separate schema on Mary but to include her within the Constitution on the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸⁷ M. Novak, *The Open Church*, p. 176.

Church. The closest vote in the entire Council went with the forces of change in this latter respect.⁸⁸

There is no doubt that not only was ecumenism a major consideration in the final analysis but, given the fierce Marian debate at the Council, there was a fear that theological mario-centredness might again take root. One reason was that there had been a rise in Marian studies and devotion just prior to the Council. As Alois Muller describes it:

Mariology was, until the beginning of Vatican 11, unquestionably the most active area in dogmatic theology. To be sure, other questions were being attacked again and again with fresh vigor - such questions, in fact, as one had until recently, perhaps, considered long settled. But while other questions matured slowly with a measured theological gravity, Mariologists were very active in their field. From the beginning there was a good deal of popular basis for the movement, a popularity often deliberately encouraged and characterized, unfortunately not without reason, as "publicity".⁸⁹

The upsurge came as a direct result of two major events in the fifty years prior to the Second Vatican Council. One was the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the other came at the hands of Pope Pius X11 with the papal definition of the Assumption (1950) and the Marian year (1954). Pius X11 probably had the greatest devotion to Mary ever known in a pope. His writings in that area were so copious that the nineteen fifties in particular were known as the years of Marian triumphalism.⁹⁰ The outcome was that the Second Vatican Council wished to forestall any dangers by means of a simple restraint. The aim of the Council was not to eliminate Mary as a force in Catholic theology but to give the movement a new vision. The Council wanted to set

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ A. Muller, "Contemporary Mariology", *TToday* 1, p. 109.

⁹⁰ Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, Irish Messenger Office, 1950.

Marian theology on the right path and provide it with a healthy growing pace so that the results would contribute to illumination and clarification of the faith in all respects.

So it was by way of compromise that the Council had to divide chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium* (which contains the section on Mary) into two parts. The first specifically concentrated on the christological approach and Mary's role in salvation in relation to Christ. The second focussed on Mary's role in relation to the Church, that is, the ecclesiological. A sample statement such as the following makes the christological case:

The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world, is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the Redeemer. Redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son and united to him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of the Mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit.⁹¹

A sample statement taken from the ecclesial section on Mary in emphasising the ecclesiological perspective reads as follows:

By reason of the gift and role of her divine motherhood, by which she is united with her Son, the Redeemer, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united to the Church. As St. Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ...But while in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph. 5:27), the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness. And so they turn their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues.⁹²

The former statement joins Mary with her Son for the salvation of the world while the latter joins Mary to the people of God or the Church on earth. A further comparison between the two statements also shows that there are christological statements in the

⁹¹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, par. 53, p. 414.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pars. 63-65, pp. 419-420.

ecclesial section and the same is true of the reverse. However, what is of significance is that here for the first time a Vatican Council has consciously tried to make a distinction between the two themes while at the same time decidedly placing a major emphasis on the ecclesiological. What is of even greater significance is that the Council made efforts to avoid certain traditional christological terms. The two most telling are Mary as co-Redeemer and Mary as mediatrix. The former is not mentioned at all and the latter is mentioned only in passing.⁹³

The very term co-Redeemer implies that in some way Christ needed a helper on a par with himself to effect the salvation of the world. We know that we were saved from the consequences of sin by Jesus the Christ. Was it then necessary for Mary to contribute to our liberation and salvation? The Council in its opening chapter immediately makes it clear by quoting from scripture that Christ alone is the Redeemer of the world:

when the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman...that we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal. 4:4). He for us men and our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnated by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary.⁹⁴

Here it is seen that the redemptive plan of God centres on Christ who was born of a woman at the fullness of time. The scripture quotation is evidence that salvation is the work of Christ alone for in Christ alone God wills to re-establish all things. While it is the task of every human being to help bring about salvation it can only be in a secondary and subordinate fashion. No one is independent of Christ in this matter. Christ is the cause of salvation for all humanity, Mary included. What is significant for Mary is not that she is co-Redeemer but that she is the bearer of salvation. As a result of her association with the Redeemer she occupies a primary place in the Church. Official

⁹³ For an excellent and detailed account of Mary as co-Redeemer see M. O'Carroll, *Mediatress of All Graces*, pp. 167-193.

⁹⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, par. 52, p. 43.

Church teaching has now eliminated a term that had been current in Marian thology since about the fifteenth century. No longer is she to be seen as co-Redeemer but rather as associate of the Redeemer.

The second suspect term, one which has not been dropped by the Council, is that of Mary as mediatrix of all graces. The Council makes the following statement to this effect:

By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix. This, however, is so understood that it neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator...No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer...The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary, which it constantly experiences and recommends to the heartfelt attention of the faithful, so that encouraged by this maternal help they may the more closely adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer.⁹⁵

There is nothing specifically new in this statement from the Council for the Church has always followed the teaching found in 1 Timothy 2:5 that the sole Mediator between God and humanity is none other than Christ. What is of consequence, however, is that many of the Popes in the hundred years between Pius IX and John XXIII had spoken with growing clarity on the meaning of Mary as mediatrix giving it an altogether untoward importance.⁹⁶ It would be incorrect to suggest that any of these Popes ever thought of Mary as mediator in equal relation to Christ or even instead of Christ. It has always been made clear that Mary's relationship to Christ in this regard has been one of subordination. Nevertheless, it is one of those terms which has been viewed as possibly ambiguous for ecumenical relations. The Council specifically stressed the role

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, par. 62, p. 419.

⁹⁶ For an extensive account of these references by the popes during this period see M. O'Carroll, *Mediatress of All Graces*, pp. 159-161.

of Christ as sole Mediator and Mary's subordination in order to allay fears of Mary's would-be equality in this matter.

This leaves the question who is Mary anyway and why had the Council such difficulty in adopting an acceptable doctrine for its members in the Church at large? According to the Belgian theologian, Els Maeckelberghe, Mary is the product of a tug of war following an astonishing number of ideas which have accumulated about her person over the centuries.⁹⁷ Her titles abound and many of them are to be found in litanies rehearsed week in and week out in Catholic churches all over the world. The result is a confusion of titles and basic Marian principles which cloud the task of finding out who Mary really is and what she is meant to be in the tradition.

Tension in Change

Whatever the time, the place or the culture the character of Mary has been changed time and again to suit respective needs. Irish theologian Anne Kelly shows a certain concern for Mary in the Christian imagination and for the way in which theology has portrayed her throughout the centuries. Kelly maintains that in Mary "we are dealing with a figure who has been shaped largely by the imaginations of the countless generations that have sought to interpret her role".⁹⁸ Almost from the early centuries of Christianity Mary came to be imaged in many and various ways to the extent that the faithful became ever more dependent on her as a necessary part of their devotional life.⁹⁹ Scripture scholar John McKenzie gives his reasons for Mary's numerous images in the tradition. He puts

⁹⁷ E. Maeckelberghe, "Mary, Maternal Friend or Virgin Mother", *Conc* 206 (1989), pp. 120-127.

⁹⁸ A. Kelly, "Mary: An Irishwoman's Perspective", *MillStud* 22 (1989), p. 8.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

it down to the lack of historical Marian evidence in the New Testament. According to McKenzie, the imagination of Christian devotion thus became entirely unrestrained.¹⁰⁰

When the Church and its theologians tried to organise teaching on Mary into some kind of coherent doctrine attempts were made to find a unifying principle which would encapsulate what the theology was about. This was an ongoing process before, during and after the Council.¹⁰¹ It should be noted here, however, that there is a significant difference between the terms *Mariology* and *Marian theology*. Prior to the Council the term Mariology would have been much more common than subsequently. The reason was that Mariology would have been viewed as a science in itself. This was created out of insights gleaned from christology, ecclesiology and anthropology. After the Council the hope of interpreting Mary *within* these contexts encouraged greater use of the term Marian theology which implies inclusivism as opposed to isolationism. Mariology, as a discipline in itself, began to suffer certain fractures when the foundations on which it had been built began to crack. One of the most influential areas of change for Mariology was the change in emphasis in christology. The Council initiated the change by placing greater focus on the humanity of Jesus than had heretofore be known since the Council of Chalcedon in 451 c.e. The following statement from Vatican II points to the new emphasis on the humanity of Christ:

¹⁰⁰ J. McKenzie, "The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament", Conc 168 (1983), p. 9.

¹⁰¹ The response to some of these complexities resulted in an introduction of certain fundamental principles into the discipline. There are attempts by theologians to find a single unifying principle on which to base Marian theology. Cyril Vollert, for example, offers good general guidelines on the understanding of these principles. Vollert points out that Mary's divine maternity has been regarded by the majority of theologians as the primary principle and has been of particular importance to Church teaching since its proclamation at Ephesus in 431 c.e. The divine maternity is seen as the cornerstone on which Marian theology rests. It is argued that the main reason for Mary's existence was to give birth to Christ and this can be verified by the scriptures. The second principle of Marian theology is that of Mary as co-Redeemer. The third is that of Mary as mother and associate of the Redeemer. This is followed by the fourth which views Mary as mother of the whole Christ or universal mother. The fifth principle is that of Mary as prototype of the Church. The sixth sees Mary as that of the perfect redemption. See Cyril Vollert, *A Theology of Mary*, Herder and Herder, 1965.

He who is the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his incarnation, he, the son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin.¹⁰²

Emphasis on the humanity of Jesus affected the work of theologians such as Karl Rahner who is arguably the most influential Catholic theologian of recent decades. Before the Council Rahner had been a philosopher of neo-scholasticism and it was through these eyes that he interpreted his christology. After the Council he began to interpret his christology through the transcendental analysis of human subjectivity.¹⁰³ Equally Rahner's Mariology prior to the Council was influenced by his former approach while after the Council his Marian theology was affected by his latter approach. Before the distinction can be properly discussed it must first be stated that Rahner had a fundamental principle for his Marian theology. That is, he believed that Mary as the "first of the redeemed"¹⁰⁴ is the single most important unifying principle on which to base a Marian theology.

In the early Rahner the work of the redemption was accomplished by the Divine reality uniting with humanity thereby reconciling, sanctifying and saving it. The climax of this communication was the Incarnation when the Word became flesh. God's part in the plan of salvation had already been established now all that humanity had to do was to respond. Mary's role in this response was absolutely pivotal for the salvation of the world. Only her free *fiat* at the moment of the Annunciation made it possible for the

¹⁰² Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, Par. 22, pp. 922-923.

¹⁰³ Cited in E. Johnson, "Mary and Contemporary Theology", *Eglise 15* (1984), p. 157.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Word to become flesh. Otherwise the unity between God and humanity could not be accomplished. God's Word had to be received by a human being and Mary was this perfect human being. Rahner makes this point particularly clear when he states that Mary is central in salvation-history as the one through whose freedom the world's salvation takes place definitively and irrevocably as God's act.¹⁰⁵

In Rahner's early work, then, Mary's role is indispensable to God's salvific work in the world. In Rahner's later work, however, there is a basic reorientation of his christological perspective. Rahner's thought shifted with the thought shift of the Second Vatican Council when it moved from a descending christology to an ascending christology. His ascending christology began with his new belief in the turn to the subject which was mentioned above. Of his new christological approach he says that:

(any) present day Christology must include a Christology of ascent...when one starts here, the historical reports about Jesus should not be considered first of all as dogmatic propositions deriving their inspiration from revelation.¹⁰⁶

Consequently Rahner now holds that the salvation of humanity has occurred primarily in the death-resurrection of Jesus and not through the Immaculate Conception which took place at the Annunciation. A significant change takes place in that the free *fiat* comes no longer from Mary but from Jesus when he accepted suffering and death on the cross with the consequential outcome of the resurrection.

What does Rahner's re-orientated christology mean for his Marian theology? It is evident that what Rahner once asserted about Mary he is now asserting about Christ. The fundamental *yes* at the Annunciation is replaced by the fundamental christological *yes* at the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It is becoming clear that an ascending

¹⁰⁵ K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol 1, p. 206.

¹⁰⁶ K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol 21, p. 223.

christology or a christology *from below* needs to be paralleled with an ascending Marian theology or a Marian theology *from below*. Keeping in mind the emphasis placed on a return to the scriptures by the Second Vatican Council this approach would focus on Mary not as a heavenly being but as a woman of the people. Like Jesus, in many ways,¹⁰⁷ Mary is not to be separated from the historical, social and religious situation of her time. Through her humanity Mary lived a life of faith, hope and love. Therefore, according to Rahner, she is the model of every Christian believer. It is unfortunate, however, that the full impact of Rahner's ascending christology has not been more fully developed in his Marian theology. Nor is it evident that such an approach has been worked out in any systematic form by the Church or its theologians to date. A re-focussed Marian theology based on a theology *from below* is essential if it is to remain true to the aspirations of the Second Vatican Council. The fifth chapter of this thesis will suggest that Rosemary Ruether has laid the foundation for such a programme with the possibility of a new ascending Marian theology thus emerging.

Rahner's work and Conciliar thought has helped to situate Mary in a closer relation to the people of the Church than heretofore. However, there is still a great deal of confusion as to her proper place and role within the Church which an ascending Marian theology does not explain. It would be overly simplistic to suggest that an ascending Marian theology should match an ascending christology and leave it there. The parallel is not so easily drawn as Rahner's idea might suggest. To begin with an ascending christology leads from the humanity of Jesus to the mystery of Christ as divinity. The same cannot be said of an ascending Marian theology. While an ascending Marian theology must begin with the humanity it can go no further because Mary is not a divinity. In other words, an ascending christology leads to the incomprehensibility of the mystery of God whereas an ascending Marian theology must remain within the

¹⁰⁷ For a concise account of the historical Jesus see D. Lane, *The Reality of Jesus*, pp. 19-43.

limits of her historicity. This is not to suggest that Mary is not a part of the mystery of God. She is but only insofar as any other member of the human race is and it is this belief that points to the very kernal of this thesis.

Traditional Marian theology is so complex that it is almost impossible to know how to handle the discipline properly. Rahner's parallel between an ascending christology and an ascending Marian theology is just a case in point. It is, therefore, necessary to categorise Marian theology into a concise set of recognisable typologies. The real Mary can only be found if the complexities in the discipline are broken down and a more inclusive set of methodologies is established. The final sub-section of this chapter is pivotal in that it will suggest that Marian theology can be divided into three broad methodologies. This categorisation will properly focus the entire thesis so that a significant typological format will take shape. The three models will be based on an understanding of three Marian types otherwise known as the theatypical, christatypical and ecclesiotypical approaches to Marian theology.

4. Three Marian Typologies

The new Marian structure will take the shape of three basic fundamental typologies two of which are already in existence. These are known in the tradition as the christotypical and ecclesiotypical approaches to Marian theology. However, they have never been fully developed and they are seldom used in the discipline. Anthony Tambasco is one of the few exceptions where he refers to them in a basic book entitled *What are they saying about Mary?*.¹⁰⁸ Here it is obvious that the christotypical approach is equivalent to the Second Vatican Council's christological approach to Marian theology. The same parallel can be drawn between the ecclesiotypical approach as found in Tambasco and the Marian ecclesiological approach of the Council. The absence of an adequate

¹⁰⁸ A. Tambasco, *What are they saying about Mary?*, Paulist Press, 1984.

delineation of the terms in question has made it possible here to change and develop them quite radically to suit the purposes of this thesis. A more detailed explanation on this point will follow as the thesis progresses.

Before approaching the task another two points should be noted. Firstly, the words christotypical and ecclesiotypical will be used in the feminine form dropping the "O" vowels in favour of "A" vowels. Secondly, and more importantly while working with these two types in earlier drafts of this thesis it became obvious that a third category, not in existence in Marian theology, was necessary. This will be known as the theatypical approach to Marian theology. Chapter two will concentrate on the theatypical approach while chapters three, four and five will focus on the christatypical and ecclesiatypical approaches respectively. In the meantime an outline of the meaning of a typology might be beneficial here and how it would function in theology in general. One Marian theologian who has done a considerable amount of research into typologies offers acceptable guidelines on this matter.

Semmelroth suggests that:

The essential content of type can be threefold if taken in its fullest sense. First, it can mean the personification or representation of a spiritual entity through some sort of image. Secondly, it can mean a real bond between one entity and another as the objective foundation of this relationship. And finally, it can be a moral example as a result of this relationship.¹⁰⁹

Typologies of their nature are complex and technical. Semmelroth's brief outline above is only a very general statement of meaning. It is neither necessary nor is it within the purview of this thesis to develop it in the way that he does.¹¹⁰ However, Semmelroth's

¹⁰⁹ O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, p. 28.

¹¹⁰ For an account of different typologies and allegories see, J. Barr, "Allegory and Typology", NDCT, pp. 11-15 also for the distinction between types and anti-types see J. Blenkinsopp, "Types and Antitypes", NCE, Vol XIV, pp. 351-352.

understanding of a typology has been chosen because it is concise and will help to put into perspective the three main typologies which make up the body of the thesis. All three types that is the, theatypical, christatypical and ecclesiastypical methods contain the essential elements of Semmelroth's criteria as typologies. In addition, each in their turn relate to God, Christ and the Church respectively. The purpose of using these typologies is to show that God, Christ and the Church are mystical concepts which find a parallel in Marian theology. The theatype images Mary of Nazareth as Goddess or equal to God, the christatype portrays her as almost equal to Christ in the mystery of redemption or just subordinate to him as a super-eminent human being and the ecclesiatype claims Mary as a model or type for the Church as the people of God.

Taking Semmelroth's quotation as a guide it is evident that the first *CRITERION* for a typology would require a *personification or representational* element. The second *CRITERION* requires that a *real bond* should exist between the two entities. That is, between the person or thing being represented and the person or thing doing the representing. The third *CRITERION* must centre around someone or something that has the capacity to become a model of *exemplary morality* as a result of this relationship. It can be stated, therefore, that the three Marian models are truly typologies since; (a) Mary has the capacity to *personify* or be *representative* of God, Christ and the Church; (b) there can be little doubt that there is a real bond between Mary and God, Christ and the Church; (c) Mary can be taken as the *moral example* of one who has an ontological relationship with God, Christ and the Church. Now a new methodology for Marian theology comes to the fore with Mary being imaged as the type of all three models.

Before launching into a detailed Marian theology based on the three typologies a brief outline of the methods in question will follow immediately. It will be necessary, in this final section of the first chapter, to describe the christatypical approach before the theatypical for explanatory purposes. However, in the interests of the thesis, the

process will be reversed by dealing with the theatypical approach first. In addition, it should be noted here that this thesis has to further incorporate more of Ruether's and the Church's general theologies as well as their Marian theologies. The thesis, therefore, goes beyond a simple development of the theatypical, christatypical and ecclesiastical approaches.

The Christatype

The christatypical model is a traditional approach which elevates Mary to almost Christ-like status. It portrays her as standing next to Christ in the salvific process and describes her accordingly. Titles such as Mary as mediatrix and co-Redeemer are common to this approach. It also includes an overly strong emphasis on Marian devotions, apparitions and a belief in her bodily Assumption. In addition, the approach can be identified with the preconciliar Catholic polemic of placing a heavy stress on the divinity of Christ. That is, a parallel can be drawn between a christology *from above* and a Marian theology *from above*. In this respect the christatypical approach aligns itself with the christological approach to Marian theology at the time of the Second Vatican Council. Where the divinity of Christ is to the forefront it could be said that the quasi-divinity or super-humanity of Mary is also to the forefront. The seeds of this model are evident in the Church from about the time of the Council of Ephesus (431 c.e.) and is constant in Church documents today. Specifically it is in use in the first half of *Lumen Gentium* the Second Vatican Council's document on Mary and in the writings of Paul VI and John Paul II. (Detailed references will be given in the appropriate chapters).

The essence of the christatypical approach is that it places Mary on a par with Christ as the perfect example of human existence. Yet, it is an exaggerated Marian theology which tends to view Mary as the great mediatrix whose mercy is more accessible than

Christ's justice. Notably a Mary who is standing at the side of Christ is necessarily facing the other members of the Church. The imagery of the close cooperation of the two in the process of salvation removes Mary from her place within the body of Church *membership* setting her above the rest of humanity. A certain confusion then arises because here is a redeemed creature playing an unacceptably supernatural role in the redemption of others while in need of redemption herself. The christatypical model is perplexing at another level. While it places Mary at the side of Christ in the salvific process it also subordinates her to him. On the one hand, Mary is equal to Christ in that she stands as his co-redemptive partner but, on the other hand, he is considered superior to her in every way as the Son of God. Thus, it will be argued that the Christatypical model allows room for ambiguity.

The Theatype

What then is to be said of that undefined Marian tradition which arose as a result of the excessive privileges given to Mary as the Mother of God? Or, what is to be said of a devotion more truly a worship of Mary that arose strongly but silently alongside of, and as a result of, the christatypical approach? It cannot be denied that while many millions of Catholics throughout the centuries would have given intellectual assent to the fact that Mary was subordinate to Jesus she was not worshipped in any way that could be termed subordinate. Many of the faithful have spent the same amount of time and more in prayer to Mary at the *Lady Altar* than they have spent praying to Jesus at the, *Sacred Heart Altar*. Even in the Liturgy of the Mass prior to the Council, while the priest was praying in a dead language that very few understood, the muted people in the congregation silently fingered the Rosary. (Interestingly, there is no well known prayer to Jesus in the Catholic tradition that is of the same standing as the Lord's Prayer and the "Hail Mary".)

The excesses which are being referred to here would go beyond anything that could be singularly included in the term christatypical. For example, a brief look around some of the shrines in Europe is testimony to this fact. The shrines to Mary are well known but who knows of any to Christ? Devotion to Mary is perhaps the most perplexing topic of all in Marian theology. For where does devotion end and worship begin? How much comes from the teaching of the Church and how much comes from the hearts and the minds of the devotees? As John Macquarrie puts it:

How does one distinguish between the genuine development of a doctrine, the drawing out of truths concealed in the original, from illegitimate accretions which get added by later generations but may be quite at variance with the intention of the original affirmations from which they claim to be derived?¹¹¹

Was Mary ever intended to be praised in the way she is today and in the way she has been throughout the centuries? The scriptures certainly do not give any evidence of this. Tradition was the primary mover. Mary was given the title *Theotokos*, (Mother of God) at Ephesus in 431 c.e. Unwittingly at the time the teaching had opened a wedge for the veneration of Mary as a substitute Mother Goddess. Even when theology narrowed this view in theory, popular piety would widen it to elevate Mary beyond the intention of the doctrinal statement of the Fathers.¹¹² Often the true meaning of Church teaching was lost to the non-learned populace resulting in a confusion between fact and fiction. The title *Theotokos* is a case in point. Popular piety acted on this title developing dramatic ideas about Mary herself. There is evidence in the apocryphal accounts of exaggerated myths vividly describing absurdities surrounding the conception of Jesus.¹¹³

¹¹¹ J. Macquarrie, *Mary for all Christians*, p. 48.

¹¹² R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, pp. 61-62.

¹¹³ Ruether also tells how the Gospel of Bartholomew (5th century) describes the divine conception. When pressed by the Apostles to tell her story Mary insists that they hold her down on all sides for fear fire will come out of her mouth, the earth will be consumed and her limbs will fly apart so great is the telling of the terrible mystery of the Incarnation. *Ibid*, p. 60.

By the time of the Middle Ages Christ becomes ever more removed from human nature with Mary replacing him as symbolic of one who provides the promises of redemption. Mary, thus, began to take the place of Christ in a way never intended by Church authorities. She was the kind Mother to be stormed by prayer whenever a devotee was in trouble or needed something badly. Christ the judge, on the other hand, was far less likely to grant the request becoming disproportionately feared as Mary became more trusted. The second chapter of this thesis will show that the Middle Ages was the culmination of Mary's power as a God-like being. Evidence to this effect abounds during this period. Such was the theatypical approach which knew no limits in its worship of her.

The Ecclesiatype

The third and final model to be considered in this thesis is the ecclesiatypical approach. It is possible that this way of viewing Marian theology could be criticised for "cutting Mary down to size".¹¹⁴ The ecclesiatypical approach is based on the ecclesiological emphasis on Mary found in the second half of the *Lumen Gentium* document of the Second Vatican Council. That the Council was responsible for a diminishment in Marian devotion, study and research was certainly the case. The ecclesiatypical focus of the Council indicated that devotion to Mary was integrated into the whole of theology and into the liturgical life of the Church. Novenas and rosaries which had previously assumed an almost equal place with the Eucharist were taken to be secondary in the sacramental life of prayer and worship. The new and unprecedented emphasis placed

¹¹⁴ Anne Loades uses a similar term in reference to the Marian teaching of the Second Vatican Council. She claims that these "documents cut Mary down to size". A. Loades, "The Virgin Mary and the Feminist Quest", AE, p. 162.

on the scriptures along with the liturgies being translated into the vernacular contributed to the diminishment of devotion to Mary.¹¹⁵

On the other hand the *diminishment* of Marian devotion should not be seen as something negative. It is simply a way of expressing a move away from the isolationist Mariology prior to the Council. No longer is it possible for Mary to be taken in isolation from her role in salvation history. One commentator John Berry puts it succinctly when he says that:

This relationship between Marian dogma and other aspects of the faith was a truth which the Second Vatican Council was at pains to stress in its treatment of Mariology. It has often been remarked how deeply significant it was that the teaching on Mary was located firmly within the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, its central document on the Church. Thus mariology and ecclesiology are seen to be inseparable in the Catholic understanding, and this truth was made abundantly clear in the chapter on 'the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the economy of salvation'.¹¹⁶

This emphasis on the relationship between Mariology and ecclesiology is a solid foundation for the new ecclesiatypical approach since it allows for a more balanced treatment of Mary in the official documents. Joseph Ratzinger takes the matter further when he adds the christological dimension. For example, he says that:

Mary cannot be assigned exclusively to christology or ecclesiology...Consequently, mariology can never be merely mariological: it is part of the whole fundamental edifice of Christ and the Church and is the most concrete expression of its interconnection.¹¹⁷

It is clear that the original isolationist Mariology is all but gone. However, another important point comes to the fore in Ratzinger's statement. That is, the tension which

¹¹⁵ A. Carr, *Transforming Grace*, p. 191.

¹¹⁶ J. Berry, "Redemptoris Mater and the Challenge of the Marian Year", PP, 1/7 (1987), p. 270.

¹¹⁷ J. Ratzinger, "On the Position of Mariology and Marian Spirituality within the Totality of Faith and Theology", TChurch, pp. 74-75.

exists between the christological and the ecclesiological teachings reflected in *Lumen Gentium*. Basically there are two theological axes here. The first is Mary's relationship with her Son and the second is Mary's relationship with us, the Church. It was shown that the Council insisted on giving this a double focus. Yet, here lies the kernel of a new problem. There is little account to date that either official Church documents or Marian theologians in general have given *unto Mary the things that are Mary's and given unto Christ the things that are Christ's*. In other words, greater attention must be made in deciding which mysteries belong to Christ and which belong to Mary within the Marian context. Elements which belong to both the former and the latter must be identified before a proper ecclesiatypical approach can emerge. However, this will not take place without considerable difficulty because the mystery of Christ and Mary's place within that is so closely associated. The solution is not to confuse their roles in the salvific process.

From a devotional perspective the Marian liturgist Christopher O'Donnell comes close to recognising the problem. However, the conclusions he draws would not be consistent with the category models of this thesis. O'Donnell points out, for example, that the mysteries of Mary such as her Immaculate Conception, her divine Motherhood, her perpetual virginity and her assumption into heaven contain both christological and ecclesiological elements. In the former approach these mysteries of Mary are related to her role in the mystery of Christ and in the latter the same mysteries are related to Mary in her role in the mystery of the Church. To make his point O'Donnell cites the preface to the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception in the revised missal:

Father, all powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks. (*christological*) You allowed no stain of Adam's sin to touch the Virgin Mary.

Full of Grace, she was to be a worthy mother of your Son,
(*ecclesiological*) your sign of favour to the Church at its beginning,

and the promise of its perfection as the bride of Christ, radiant in beauty. (*christological*) Purest of Virgins, she was to bring forth your Son,

the innocent lamb who takes away our sins. (*ecclesiological*) You chose her from all women to be our advocate with you and our pattern of holiness.¹¹⁸

By citing the prefaces to the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception in the missal O'Donnell is simply explaining that Marian theology has been given a double focus thus avoiding the emotive issues of the minimalism and maximalism of the Second Vatican Council. A co-relation of christological and ecclesiological themes have been written into all Marian documents ever since. However, the attempt by the authorities to integrate Marian theology into a broader theological perspective has become little more than an established confusion of the mysteries. Another glance at O'Donnell's citation will show that the difficulty arises when one tries to write a new Marian theology based on typological models. The task, therefore, is to distinguish and then separate what properly belongs to the christatypical from what properly belongs to the ecclesiotypical not forgetting the new theatypical model. It is now evident that the ecclesiotypical approach, unless it can stand on its own, will not have the essential elements to form a new Marian methodology. If a new methodology, based on the ecclesiatype is to emerge, it will be necessary to develop the ecclesiatology along very specific ecclesiological lines.

Chapters two, three and four of this thesis will show the complexities of such a task by selecting and then defining christatypical and ecclesiotypical themes not only from the Church documents¹¹⁹ but also from Ruether. In both these respects the new theatypical model will also be taken into account. By the end of the thesis it will be evident that of

¹¹⁸ C. O'Donnell, "Growth and Decline in Mariology", MChur, pp. 39-40.

¹¹⁹ All the Marian writings since the Second Vatican Council are basically the same. Therefore, the two most important official documents will be used as the primary examples for this thesis. These are: Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, CTS, 1974 and John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, Veritas, 1967.

all three approaches the ecclesiastical model may become the point of contact with the position taken by feminist theologians such as Ruether. In the meantime the next chapter will begin by creating a new category which would recognise explicitly that Mary has been elevated to the status of the divine. Chapter two will show that there was a theotypical approach to Marian theology emergent in the tradition from about the Middle Ages¹²⁰ up until the present day. This is especially to be seen in the writings of some of the great mystics of the Middle Ages and is to be found also in the work of the contemporary Latin American theologian Leonardo Boff. The development of the theotypical model will be difficult particularly because the Church never gave voice officially to any such phenomenon. Nevertheless, the high honour and devotion paid to Mary from the Middle Ages up until the Second Vatican Council would suggest that the Church was gravely concerned that such a phenomenon had been taking place in the tradition.

¹²⁰ Hilda Graef's meticulous historical works on Marian doctrine and devotion will be heavily drawn upon to bolster the argument for the second chapter. See, H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vols. 1 and 2, Sheed and Ward, 1963 and 1965 respectively.

A CROWN OF TWELVE STARS

____Part Two____

5. Elements of the Theatypical Model

It will be shown throughout the next four chapters that each of the three models, that is, the theatypical, christatypical and ecclesiastypical all have themes or elements which are specific to each model. Given the range and complexity of images and titles which have accumulated around Mary of Nazareth in the last two thousand years it is not possible, however, to categorise all of them. Such a task might make for an interesting thesis in the future provided the work were to concentrate solely on Marian theology itself. In the meantime, some of the more important Marian images and symbols will be selected and located under the models in question. A number of those which concern the theatypical model will be dealt with in this chapter. Among the most significant of the theatypical elements are Mary's virginity, her virginal motherhood, and her Immaculate Conception. There are also some Marian *themes* which could be classified under the theatypical model. These include an understanding of the set of relationships portrayed in the tradition between Mary and Eve, Mary and the Church as Brides of Christ and Mary as an element of the divine.

Once these themes have been considered another task lies ahead. That is, the categorisation of the most important title of all which deems Mary as the Mother of God or *Theotokos*. The naming of this title more than any other has been responsible for the elevation of Mary in the created order of things. For this reason it has been selected for placement under the theatypical model. However, it has been placed here only with serious reservation. The title cannot meet with the same fate as the other theatypical themes and titles, which is elimination, since to question that Mary is the

Mother of God is to question the divinity of Christ. Therefore, it will be shown that Mary as *Theotokos* will be retained with a certain proviso. This will be described in the appropriate section below. From here it will be claimed that the *Theotokos* title has been responsible for raising Mary herself to the level of divinity. That Mary should be imaged in such a light is unacceptable to this thesis. The image of Mary as divinity gathered momentum from about the Middle Ages with vestiges remaining up until the Second Vatican Council. Interestingly, evidence of it is still to be found today particularly in the work of the Latin American theologian Leonardo Boff.

Mary's Perpetual Virginity

Three of the tradition's claims about Mary include the teaching on her perpetual virginity, her virginal motherhood and the Immaculate Conception. The common denominator for each of these is the Church's great emphasis on virginity as a gift from God. What is to be said about virginity specifically is that it is especially commendable when it is espoused by those who abstain from sexual activities so that they might dedicate their lives more completely to the society in which they live. Alternatively, if virginity is upheld as a virtue of superior nature to the non-virginal state then a problem arises.

The Early Fathers certainly upheld virginity as a great virtue by insisting that women in particular should hide their female bodily image. Women were expected to disguise their physical appearance by wearing veils and unshapely clothes concealing their faces and limbs. The object of the exercise was to encourage libidinal repression in a period when sexual practices were frowned upon. A high praise of women who practised virginity followed reaching a climax in its understanding of Mary of Nazareth as perpetual virgin. Mary's perpetual virginity came to be seen as a necessary part of her being in the world. Her body could not be tainted in any way by

the sins of the flesh, especially by sexual intercourse. It was the asceticism of the early Fathers and their quarrel with Gnosticism that provided two impulses for the development of the Marian doctrine on Mary's virginity. The first was the felt need to safeguard the birth of Jesus from having anything to do with sexual intercourse. The second was the Fathers' desire to exalt the virtue of virginity itself. Mary's own virginity then became an exalted symbol for those who wished to practice Christianity in a more perfect way.¹

The matter in question at the moment is to ponder on whether or not Mary remained a virgin all her life. The Catholic Church holds that Mary is and always has been a virgin. It is no longer a matter for official discussion. The arguments for and against the perpetual virginity of Mary are long and complex but a brief outline as to what *perpetual* virginity means is necessary here. Michael O'Carroll, who has written an encyclopaedia of Marian theology, offers a clear explanation.² His summary on Mary's perpetual virginity states that there are three themes to be considered. Firstly, that Mary of Nazareth conceived her Son Jesus while still remaining a virgin. Secondly, this virginity was not altered by childbirth and thirdly, in her marriage to St. Joseph she did not have sexual relations with him. The first stage, that is the virginal conception itself, appears to be confirmed by the scriptures and is otherwise known as *virginitas ante partum*. The second stage came about as a result of Church intuition *virginitas in partu* and the third *virginitas post partum* or the perpetual virginity has been held by most theologians almost since the beginning of Christianity.³ This has almost always been the case except for one notable exception, Tertullian.

¹ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, p. 54.

² M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, Glazier, 1982.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

It is surprising to find that the great misogynist, Tertullian who referred to women as the *devil's gateway* should want to teach that Mary was not a perpetual virgin. The reason, according to the classical theologian John Quasten, is that Tertullian is eager to stress the real humanity of Christ. Since Christ's body was not heavenly he had to be born from the usual natural substance of human flesh. Christ was, therefore, born from the very substance of Mary, *ex Maria*. Tertullian does not have any real difficulty with Mary's virginity at conception but he denies, for the sake of his theology, that she was a virgin *in partu* and *post partum*. Jerome in reaction to this teaching took issue with Tertullian on the matter and retorted that he had nothing to say to Tertullian except that he could not consider him to be a man of the Church.⁴

According to Anthony Tambasco the bulk of recent literature has concentrated on Mary's *virginitas ante partum*. That is, Mary's virginity before the birth of Jesus. Very few Catholic authors would deny this as historical fact adding that it is a pointer to other theological truths.⁵ Nevertheless, one formidable scholar, Raymond Brown, has concluded that the scriptures leave the historicity an open question and it cannot be decided on biblical evidence alone.⁶ Where the scripture scholars have difficulty with this issue official Church teaching has none. Pope John Paul, for example, takes for granted Mary's *virginitas ante partum*. He says that when Mary asks the question at the Annunciation as to how she can conceive since she has no husband (Lk 1: 31-37) the reply is that nothing is impossible with God. Both Mary's question and the answer she received are taken by the Pope as given.⁷ While it would be unrealistic to expect a detailed scriptural exegesis in an Apostolic Letter some reference to the difficulties of the exegesis could have been referred to in the footnotes. All too often official Church

⁴ J. Quasten, *Patrology*, p. 329.

⁵ A. Tambasco, *What are they saying about Mary?*, p. 20.

⁶ R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, pp. 298-309.

⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pars. 3-4, pp. 11-13.

teaching takes a literal translation from the Bible and simply transcribes it into its official documents without reference to academic enquiry.

Elizabeth Johnson is one contemporary author who questions the precise literary genre of Mary in the gospels in general. Specifically she has difficulties with the questions concerning the virginal conception. On this matter Johnson expresses herself in the following way:

In particular, questions about the virginal conception of Jesus need to be thought through anew; at the very least it needs to be made clear that while the faith assertion of a virginal conception might refer to a historical event, such faith testimony does not also bear within itself the grounds of faith as much as do the mighty deeds of Jesus or his death and resurrection. If done in a prudently critical way, such explorations even while narrowing the scope of classical Mariology will not destroy it; for the New Testament is not only - and not even - primarily historical report but theologically inspired Scripture.⁸

The above brief outline suggests that the virginal conception of Jesus cannot be taken without question. Yet, a clerical celibate culture has insisted on such a tradition throughout the centuries. This male culture has written of Mary's virginal conception from a purely male viewpoint. What would it mean, for example, if questions about the perpetual virginity of Mary were to be thought out again as Johnson suggests? It is possible to agree with Johnson that classical Mariology would hardly be destroyed. A glance at one of the gospels, for example, St. Mark's would show that Mark does not even seem to know of the virginal conception. The question of the virginal conception arises only from the other texts. Far from writing about conception there is no mention in Mark even of a childhood of Jesus. Jesus only arrives on the scene as a full grown man where he submits himself to John in the Jordan (Mk 1:11).

⁸ E. Johnson, "Mary and Contemporary Christology: Rahner and Schillebeeckx", *Eglise* 15 (1984), pp. 155-182.

If Mark is taken literally the most that can be said about him is that where there is a pregnancy it can be taken for granted that there was sexual communion between a man and a woman. The first act of sexual union eliminates the virginity of both the male and the female. It could be argued that we cannot adduce any more from the gospel of Mark on the matter because there is no premise from which to show that Mark knew of the virginal conception. Even more importantly comes the idea that a virginal conception is an extraordinary event. If Mark had known of such a phenomenon it is highly unusual that he would not have written of the mystery. Surely if Mark had evidence that Christ had been conceived in this way he would have made a point of saying so in his writings? It would have been of great personal interest to him as a disciple of Jesus. In addition, there is no convincing explanation for omitting data on the virginal conception.

No doubt the above approach is an oversimplistic reading of that part of the gospel of Mark in question. What has been suggested above has been claimed from a historical reading of the text and not from a theological one. However, it suffices to make the point that Mary can be seen as the mother of Jesus without her necessarily having to have conceived him virginally. This in its turn has not done any damage to the image of Mary as the mother of Jesus in Mark's gospel. Mary is the mother of Jesus, according to Mark, and Mark proceeds with his gospel story from there. Mary, virgin or not, still has her part to play. Her unique relationship with Jesus is not affected by her virginity or absence of it. Mary comes on the scene as the mother of Jesus claiming this unique relationship with him (Mk 2:7-10) and she visits him with his brothers at her time of concern for his safety (Mk 3:31).

Mary's Virginal Motherhood

The arguments about Mary's virginity during and after the birth of Jesus raise the question of her virginal motherhood. It may be historical fact or theological symbol. Official Church teaching has traditionally taught both to the extent that entire vatican encyclicals can be written today without ever raising the question.⁹ Many Protestants who maintain the historicity of Mary's virginal conception part company with Catholicism when it comes to the business of Mary's marriage with Joseph and even having other children. Much of the controversy revolves around Mark 6:3 and it parallels. These speak of the *brothers and sisters* of Jesus and even name some.¹⁰ St. Ambrose was one of the first in the tradition to officially doubt the belief that Mary had other children. He says that:

...the brothers have been from Joseph, not from Mary. Whoever wishes to investigate this matter more carefully, will find the answer. We did not think we should investigate these things, since the name of brother may be common to several.¹¹

Throughout the centuries this kind of thinking about Mary as the mother of other children was maintained in order to preserve her intact for Christ. Ambrose, for his part was one of those.¹² According to the scripture scholar Wilfrid Harrington, however, the matter is more complex. His interpretation goes as follows:

There are three main views as to what the text means: (1) that they were full blood brothers and sisters of Jesus (Helvidius); (2) that they were cousins of Jesus (Jerome). For all who accept the virginity of Mary the first view is obviously excluded; and the second has very much the air of an ad hoc solution. In favor of the third position is the

⁹ John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, Veritas, 1987.

¹⁰ A. Tambasco, *What are they saying about Mary?*, p. 22.

¹¹ Cited in M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 18.

¹² *Virginitas in partu* is the teaching that Mary's virginity remained intact throughout the actual birth. This means that she would have been free from pain since the womb would have been opened in some miraculous way to allow for the delivery.

fact that the term "brother" regularly has a broader meaning in the Old Testament.¹³

Whichever, of the arguments is applied there is a possibility that God's intervention in the birth of Jesus did not necessarily exclude Joseph's biological fatherhood. One reason is that the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures was used by the Christians to transfer the Emmanuel passage in Isaiah to the corresponding passage in the gospel of Matthew. As it stands in Matthew the passage reads "(look), the virgin shall conceive and a bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel" (Mt 1:23). On the other hand, the original text in Isaiah reads "(look), the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel" (Is 7:14). At a glance it can be seen that the word "young woman" in Isaiah has been translated into "virgin" in Matthew. The linguistic explanation for the change in translation is given by John McKenzie as follows:

The LXX used *parthenos*, "virgin," to translate the Hebr word in Is 7:14 for "young girl" (*almah*). This gives the text of Is. a new dimension of reality, and Matthew uses it to affirm the virgin birth. His emphasis, however, seems to be more on the declaration of a savior who shall be called Emmanuel, "God with us," than on the word *parthenos*. The birth initiates the Messianic age of salvation to which the whole OT looks forward. The age begins with the birth of a child, and this is the force of the allusion to Is.¹⁴

What can be deduced from the above is that the virgin birth is a statement about the divinity of Jesus and not in itself a statement about the mother of Jesus. Nor is there any suggestion in the New Testament that Mary remained a virgin. Matthew even implies that after the birth of Jesus Joseph and Mary had normal marital relations (Mt 1:25). Matthew 13:55-56 and Mark 6:3 also imply that Mary was the mother of other sons and daughters (see Helvidius' argument in Harrington above). In the light of these interpretations it is being suggested that the doctrines of Mary as perpetual and

¹³ W. Harrington, *Mark*, pp. 77-78.

¹⁴ J. McKenzie, "The Gospel According to Matthew", JBC, p. 67.

virginal mother need not be of any great consequence to a new Marian theology. They are unnecessary theotypical elements which could be eliminated from the tradition on the grounds of scriptural exegesis alone.

The objective of such teaching was to remove Mary as far as possible from the taint of the sin of humanity. Also it was intended that Mary be removed from every human being in such a way that those who were devoted to her would be made to feel inferior whenever they contemplated her. As Marina Warner reminisces:

The virgin, sublime model of chastity, nevertheless remained for me the most holy being I could ever contemplate, and so potent was her spell that for some years I could not enter a church without pain at all the safety and beauty of the salvation I had forsaken. I remember visiting Notre Dame in Paris and standing in the nave, tears starting in my eyes, furious at that old love's enduring power to move me. But though my heart rebelled, I held fast to my new intimation that in the very celebration of the perfect human woman, both humanity and women were subtly denigrated.¹⁵

Mary as a "sublime model of chastity" had its origins not only in the perpetual virginity and virginal motherhood but also in the belief that Mary had been miraculously conceived. Women in particular were denigrated by this title and it sealed Mary's fate as a woman who was so far beyond human experience and fault that she became a kind of heavenly phantom. The stories of the apparitions at Lourdes where Mary announces to the world that she is the *Immaculate Conception* is yet another element of the theotypical model. To begin with the theme is particularly problematic because it is not to be found anywhere in the scriptures. Nonetheless, tradition has used both a Genesis text (Gen 3:15) and a Lukan text (Lk 1:42) to imply that Mary was set apart from other women in that she was especially graced by God. In the Hebrew scriptures the text reads "I will put enmity between you and the woman" and the New Testament text reads "(blessed) are you among women". To

¹⁵ M. Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, p. XX1.

ensure a clear understanding that the tradition created a theatypical theme in this case a brief doctrinal and historical background will be outlined.

Mary's Immaculate Conception

The official pronouncement on Mary as being immaculately conceived came on the 8th of December 1854 by Pius IX when he made the following solemn declaration:

...the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary, during her creation and at the moment of its infusion into the body, was enriched with the grace of the Holy Ghost, and was preserved free from original sin; and also in favour of the festival, and of the worship established in honour of the Conception of the same Virgin Mary Mother of God, and rendered to her according to that pious opinion;-these we renew, and under the censures and penalties decreed in the same constitutions, we command that they be carried into effect.¹⁶

This pronouncement was the climax to a tormented debate that had begun around the fourth century with St. Ephraim and was endlessly argued by the doctors of the Church up until the Council of Trent in 1546. At this time Trent exempted Mary from its decree on Original Sin.¹⁷ Michael O'Carroll tells of a history subsequent to that Council which led to further papal interventions on the matter. O'Carroll states that:

... between 1600 and 1800 the Jesuits alone brought out 300 works on the Immaculate Conception...On December 1667, a landmark was reached. Pope Alexander VII issued the bull *Sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum*...On 15 May 1695, Innocent XII imposed on the whole Church the Office and Mass of the Immaculate Conception, with Octave; on 6 December 1708, Clement XI established the feast as a holyday of obligation...{Pius IX}...first made a consultation of the entire hierarchy of the Church (*Ubi primum*, 2 February 1849) and found it practically unanimous on the subject. Then he set cardinals and theologians to work on the composition of an appropriate text. ...It was not an age of critical scholarship...there were practically no footnotes, few references to Fathers...the essential words "preserved

¹⁶ U. Bourke, The Bull "Ineffabilis", pp. 28-29.

¹⁷ See M. O'Carroll, "The Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Our Lady in Today's Thinking", MChur, pp. 44-47.

free from all stain of original sin" were written into the Constitution on the Church, published by Vatican 11 (LG 59).¹⁸

Put simply the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in Catholic theology means that from the very first moment of her existence Mary was said to be free from the Original Sin of Adam and Eve. One Cappuchin theologian, who goes by the name of Father Canice, explains that due to the sin of Adam the supernatural beauty of the soul was lost and with it went the sanctifying grace given to humanity by God. The sin of Adam or Original Sin is a privation of sanctifying grace which in the First plan of Providence was given to our souls. Where Mary is different from the rest of humanity is that not even for a moment did she experience this privation. From the instant when her soul was created and united to her body she was naturally prepared to receive the sanctifying grace. This only happened by a very special favour of the Godhead. The favour assigns to Mary a place apart from all other creatures.¹⁹

If it were possible the title the *Immaculate Conception* should be removed from the tradition. One way is to look again at Augustine's teaching on Original Sin. Denis Carroll writing on this matter says that a particular understanding of the Greek term *eph ho* as *in whom* (all have sinned) was based on a faulty translation of Roman's 5:12. The term has been misunderstood to mean that Paul urges an inclusion of all the human race in the sin of Adam. However, today exegetes tend not to translate *eph ho* by *in whom* but by *because* or *so that*. If the text now reads *because all humanity has sinned* the meaning becomes unquestionably different.²⁰

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁹ Father Canice, *Mary*, pp. 52-53.

²⁰ Although the term "Original Sin" is not a biblical one Paul's text to the Romans has been interpreted as the source of the doctrine (Rom 5:12). Augustine is sometimes blamed for the original faulty translation but Ambrosiaster before him had a similar idea. However, Augustine came to be known as the one who perpetrated the idea. Carroll explains that there are now three possible interpretations of the text. Firstly, that Adam being the first human being influences the rest of humanity by his bad example; secondly, that Adam's sin leaves us with an inherited tendency to sin

The importance of Carroll's point is evident when taken in relation to Mary. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was introduced to eliminate any possibility of Mary's being tainted by Original Sin. If it is now the case that Original Sin came through the faulty exegesis of a Pauline text (which was instead arguing more about the grace of Christ than anything else) then the dogma becomes superfluous. It must be noted that to dismiss the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in a few brief passages would not be theologically admissable. However, this must be weighed against a theology with a supernatural emphasis which overshadows Mary's essential womanhood. At present the dogma of the Immaculate Conception largely contributes to the reflection of Mary as something reminiscent of the Goddess of ancient times.

The three themes outlined above, that is, Mary's perpetual virginity, her virginal motherhood and her Immaculate Conception are all arguably theotypical. No other woman is capable of perpetual virginity once she has conceived and given birth to a child. Nor is it possible for a woman to be a virgin and a mother at one and the same time. Each one in its turn is symbolic of something other than that which is found in normal womanhood. In addition, each one tells of something supernatural making it impossible for other women to be able to identify with Mary in any real sense. Anything that takes the Mary of the scriptures and makes of her an impossible ideal, such as these above themes, should be removed from the tradition in whatever way possible. There is another point worth mentioning. Mary's perpetual virginity, virginal motherhood and Immaculate Conception are quite exclusive of Christ. Further consideration of them will show that they focus solely on Mary rather than on Mary's

through weakness of the human heart or thirdly which is the original idea that Adam makes us all sinners whether or not we wish to be. Logically the passage seems to suggest that it was Adam's disobedience and not humanity's choice which made us sinners. However, Carroll argues that it would stretch the imagination too far to have made it into a full blown doctrine on Original Sin. Yet, for over a millennium and a half Paul's text has been taken to argue this case. D. Carroll. *Towards a Story of the Earth*, pp. 89-117.

relationship to Christ. While it could be argued that Christ is implicitly present it cannot be argued that he is explicitly present, thus, the themes are isolationist.

6. Daughters of Eve

Behind these gracious titles of Mary lies a pernicious misogyny where the one beautiful and perfect woman was to be set up against every other woman ever to be created. Probably the early Father who was most influential in the Church in this respect was St. Augustine. To justify his view that woman was not made in the true image of God he interprets 1 Corinthians 11:3-12 in the following way:

How then did the apostle tell us that the man is the image of God and therefore he is forbidden to cover his head, but that the woman is not so, and therefore she is commanded to cover hers? Unless forsooth according to that which I have said already, when I was treating of the nature of the human mind, that the woman, together with her own husband, is the image of God, so that the whole substance may be one image, but when she is referred to separately in her quality as a helpmeet, which regards the woman alone, then she is not in the image of God, but, as regards the man alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him in one.²¹

Ethically, then, woman is dangerous to the male for she is the key figure symbolic of the Fall. Her whole body and all of its functions become something to be avoided. However, there was a parallel tradition running through the Church Fathers which allowed for the possibility of woman's liberation from sexual oppression and male domination. The view found its roots in Genesis 3:16 where men and women were seen to be equal in creation except that women had to suffer the effects of sin because Eve was cursed to bear children. The only way in which women could be released from this curse was to remain in a virginal state. If women remained virginal they could be released from both male domination and from the pain of childbearing. The virtue of virginity became more and more to be sought after. If a woman wished to be

²¹ Cited in R. Ruether, "Misogynism" RSex, p. 156.

redeemed she had to transcend her female nature and become transformed into a male.²²

Virginity became the ascetical ideal for all the Church Fathers. St. Ambrose believed that for women it was the best way:

Quite rightly is a good wife praised, but a pious virgin is more rightly preferred, for the Apostle says: 'He who gives his daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her does better. The one thinks about the things of God, the other about the things of the world'. The one is bound by marriage bonds, the other is free from bonds; one is under the law, the other under grace. Marriage is good: through it the means of human continuity are found. But virginity is better: through it are attained the inheritance of a heavenly kingdom and a continuity of heavenly rewards.²³

In virginity then woman can rise to a spirituality equivalent to that of the male. However, she has to do so at the expense of "crushing out of her being all vestiges of her bodily and her female 'nature'".²⁴ The very epitome of this ideal was gathered into Mary the ever perfect Queen of heaven. The Church Fathers saw to it that Mary, the closest woman to God, became an impossible ideal for women to follow. The very basis of this impossibility arose from the teaching on her virginity now being described as a theotypical element in Marian theology. The all pervasive damage that was done to women through the theotypical elements in Marian theology can be seen particularly in the contrast that was drawn up in the tradition between Mary and Eve.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 159-161.

²³ Ambrose, "Synodal Letters", Fathers 26, p. 140.

²⁴ R. Ruether, "Misogynism", RSex, p. 151.

Mary and Eve

While the virginal woman who followed Mary's example of virginity was bound for heaven the price was paid on the head of all other women. The dangerous daughters of Eve were to be avoided whatever the circumstances. The celibate male could (and still can) safely turn his affections to the person of the Virgin Mary as *his Lady* in order to repress certain aspects of his sexuality. Spiritual eroticism can be directed to the higher, spiritual feminine transforming the soul and turning it away from the carnal female of the earth.²⁵ Rosemary Ruether is one theologian who believes that traditional Mariology, with its insistence of virginity at all costs, reflects and expresses the ideology of the patriarchal feminine. While she would have nothing against the virginal state in itself she is against the way the teaching on Mary's virginity has been used to suppress women.²⁶

Probably one of the most detrimental parallels throughout the history of Christianity in this respect is the analogy made between Mary and Eve. Mary has been seen as one who accepts the Word of God in contrast to Eve the fallen offspring. When Eve rejected God's commandment Mary reversed the evil work of Eve. Eve's disobedience tempted the man Adam but Mary through her obedience brought forth Jesus who overcame the sin of humanity. As far back as Irenaeus in the second century c.e. there was a belief that each of the elements in the Fall could be paralleled in the history of salvation. Each stage of the Fall could be reversed and overcome in salvation. Eve, the original virgin, was misled by an evil angel and caused the Fall. Mary, on the other hand, believed the good angel Gabriel and accepted the Word of God.²⁷

²⁵ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk*, p. 147.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

²⁷ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, pp. 53-54.

By the fourth century the writings of the Early Fathers on Mary and their praise of her shows that she is the epitome of spiritual womanhood. Even Ambrose, who was known for his sympathy towards women, blamed them for the downfall of the world by comparing Eve to Mary when he says "(folly) through a woman, through the Virgin wisdom".²⁸ Interestingly, John Macquarrie writing a recent Marian theology tries to justify the Eve/Mary dichotomy when he says that the Bible starts off with an unfavourable picture of woman. She was the first to be tempted and succumb to that temptation. However, the New Testament compensates for this because it gives Mary, a woman, a part in the drama of salvation. A part which Macquarrie refers to as indispensable. Macquarrie insists that due to this indispensable role of Mary a great honour has been bestowed on women in general. Therefore, while in the Genesis story Eve is put in the shade by Adam in the gospel story the pre-eminence goes to Mary above Joseph.²⁹

Joseph is hardly a good contrast as he is a figure little known either in the scriptures or in the tradition of the Church. What is of greater interest, however, is Macquarrie's passing reference to Adam and Eve. Eve was put in the shade by Adam and this has reverberated against women throughout the history of Judeo/Christianity. It could be argued, nonetheless, that the Adam/Christ parallel is merely the same as the Eve/Mary parallel. Just as man is put down by the sin of Adam woman is put down by the sin of Eve. Correspondingly, just as man is elevated by Christ's salvation woman is elevated by Mary's part in salvation. Anne Carr, for her part would not agree with such an explanation. She notes that:

The Eve/Mary symbolism is adapted from and easily parried with the Adam/Christ symbol of Paul's Epistle to the Romans (5:12-21). But the male pair has seldom been used in the church with such negative

²⁸ Cited in M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 20.

²⁹ J. Macquarrie, *Mary for all Christians*, pp. 3-4.

effect. Adam has been seen rather as the symbol of human solidarity, a sign of the universality of Christ's redemption. As all have sinned in Adam, all are redeemed in Christ. The Eve/Mary symbol, by contrast, according to recent patristic scholarship, served to identify all real women with Eve while upholding in Mary an impossible ideal (virgin and mother, both terms linked with women's sexuality).³⁰

In addition, it would be true to say that the term "Adam" is not just a "symbol of human solidarity" as Carr suggests but it is also a symbolic term for humanity in general. As Denis Carroll would have it the term is a very complex one. The word itself is used five hundred and thirty nine times in the Bible. In the majority of cases it is translated to mean *humanity* and not until late in the Hebrew scriptures was it understood as a proper name applying to a particular individual. Carroll claims that as a proper name it is certainly of post-exilic usage. Even although in the New Testament it is clear that Paul thought of Adam as one man it is far from clear that he wished to teach this in any definitive way. In Carroll's understanding "the role assigned to 'Adam', while more than a mere literary foil, in no sense commits Paul to any doctrine of Adam's personal unicity".³¹

Adam then has not been used in the tradition in quite the same way as Eve. Eve, although symbolic of all women, is not a generative term. *Adam* can apply to humanity in general or to the individual first man. Eve, on the other hand, specifically applies only to women. So that when it is said that all humanity inherited the sin of Adam it is not quite the same as saying that all women inherited the sin of Eve. Furthermore, it could be argued that in some sense women are doubly guilty for they sinned through *Adam* who stands for humanity as well as sinning through Eve. Men for their part sinned through *Adam* but not through Eve. The entire archetypal

³⁰ A. Carr, "Mary in the Mystery of the Church: Vatican Council II", MAW, pp. 23-24.

³¹ D. Carroll, *Towards a Story of the Earth*, pp. 93-94.

understanding of Eve as she portrayed in the tradition is, therefore, called into question.

Depth psychologist Maria Kassel would say, for example, that Eve as an archetype is a questionable function. The archetypal side to Eve was made personally responsible for leading man into sin. Eve as an archetype was taken up by the Christian unconscious and was projected on to real women. As a result Kassel says that "(since) 'being led astray' to awareness by 'Eve' includes the awareness of sexual differentiation, woman's character of 'Eve' was seen in sexual seduction of the man".³² This, she explains, is one of the reasons why the Fathers of the Church and church men in general have regarded women as the gateway where evil was able to invade humanity.³³ All of this has had a psychologically detrimental effect on women since women in the Catholic Church for centuries have subjected themselves to the images of Eve and Mary. Kassel is in little doubt, therefore, that these images are connected with the weak ego formation to be found in women.³⁴

Today, official Church teaching still claims the Eve/Mary typology. Pope John Paul 11 interprets it by reiterating traditional teaching. He reminds the faithful that the coupling Adam/Christ is often linked with that of Eve/Mary. If Mary is the New Eve then, he asks, what is the meaning of this analogy? His reply is that there are many. One of significant importance to the Pope is that Mary is to be seen as the full revelation of all that is woman. This, he believes, is a revelation that is commensurate with the mystery of redemption. For John Paul 11, then, the Eve/Mary typology goes beyond the limit of the Book of Genesis. When this takes place woman can go back

³² M. Kassel, "Mary and the Human Psyche considered in the light of Depth Psychology", *Conc* 168 (1983), pp. 74-82.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

before the Fall and take her place in creation as God had planned. Hence, "Mary is 'the new beginning' of the *dignity and vocation of women*, of each and every woman".³⁵ In his writing the Pope did not show any particular sensitivity to the difficulties that women today might have with the Eve/Mary typology. He simply emphasised again, as the early Fathers did, that Mary was to be seen as the New Eve and women for their part could glory in this piece of good news.

There can be little doubt that the Eve/Mary typology, because it is of harm to women, should be removed from the documents of the Church. Despite attempts by theologians and church authors to justify the typology its negative connotations cannot be overlooked. Women are not simply being put in the shade by Mary, the perfect woman, but they are in some way downgraded in their humanity as well. Mary, here is once again raised to that level of perfection which ordinary women cannot hope to attain. Once more, therefore, it can be claimed that here is another element of the theatypical approach that has been detrimental to women through the medium of Mary. Nor is the Eve/Mary typology the only one which is to be seriously questioned. There is another more ambiguous one, certainly theatypical, which has negative implications not only for women but for Mary herself. It is a double tiered imagery which portrays both Mary and the Church as brides of Christ.

Brides of Christ

Both Mary and the Church as the brides of Christ are closely related themes. As this section progresses it will become more apparent why the themes are being established as theatypical rather than ecclesiastical. Mary as the bride of Christ was a favourite idea of Joseph Scheeben. Living in the nineteenth century he is considered to have been one of the best Marian theologians of his day. Scheeben looked upon Mary not

³⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, par. 11, p. 45.

only as the mother of Christ but also as the bride of Christ. He believes that the bride of Christ image places Mary "in a true and actual spiritually-matrimonial relationship to God from the beginning".³⁶ Taking Scheeben's statement as the norm for understanding the theme makes the theatypical case. What makes the image specifically theatypical is that it focuses on Mary's marriage relationship to Christ as God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The closeness of the marriage bond means that in this instance Mary must necessarily become an utterly transcendent being. While earthly creatures will have a spiritual relationship with God the same cannot be said of a matrimonial relationship. It is the matrimonial aspect of Mary's relationship that makes it theatypical because matrimonial symbolism of its very nature hints at almost inseparable closeness by any standards.

This divine marriage of which Scheeben writes is described by him in the following way:

The factor that really forms the *personal character* in the divine motherhood... represents *the grace of the divine motherhood* is a *supernatural, spiritual union of the person of Mary with the divine Person of her Son, which is effected by the will and power of God...*this union, according to the nature of marriage, involves a togetherness of both persons in one organic whole, in which they are grown together, and a mutual belonging, in which Mary is joined to the Logos and completely possessed by him, whilst the Logos, as being infused into her...gives himself to her and receives her as his companion and help into the most intimate, complete and permanent communion.³⁷

For Scheeben, then, Mary was at one and the same time both the mother and the spouse of Christ as God. He believes that of all the attributes given to Mary in the tradition the most distinguished was that which was designated to her through the divine matrimony. What is to be said of Scheeben's approach is that it is most strongly theatypical on the grounds that Mary is both completely in union with and infused by

³⁶ Cited in H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 2, p. 119.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

the *Logos* to the detriment of her own nature as a human being. To be bride and mother to the same being stretches the imagination to the limits albeit symbolically. It could be said also of this imagery that Mary is viewed as having some kind of esoteric knowledge which she shares with the Son in the Godhead. For this reason it is difficult to see how Mary is anything other than a spark of the Divine with all the Gnostic innuendos intact.

In addition, one other Marian theologian, Cyril Vollert, would disagree with Scheeben on different grounds. Vollert points out that nowhere in the scriptures is Mary referred to as the spouse of Christ. She is exclusively his mother. For Vollert, the union between mother and Son surpasses that of any imagery including the relationship between a husband and wife. This in its turn makes superfluous the bride of Christ image.³⁸ Mary as the bride of Christ, therefore, is not a realistic metaphor for Marian theology. Although in the tradition Mary has been seen as more closely associated to Christ than any other a marriage metaphor is confusing. Mary's *yes* at the Annunciation was not the *yes* of a contractual marriage. It was the *yes* of motherhood. The two simply cannot be used even in symbolic form or the tradition could leave itself open to the charge of allowing an oedipus image to be encouraged between Mary and her Son Jesus.

Another major problem with Mary being imaged as the bride of Christ is that it is paralleled with the Church as the bride of Christ. The Church is the redeemed community otherwise known sometimes as as the bride of Christ or the Mother of Christians. The roots of the symbol come from the Hebrew scriptures where Israel was seen as God's wife.³⁹ The relationship between God and Israel was one of

³⁸ C. Vollert, *A Theology of Mary*, p. 78.

³⁹ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk*, p. 139.

symbolic matrimony. Later in the Prophets this relationship was expressed in a negative way. Israel was the faithless wife who played the harlot whenever, in weakness, she returned to the old pagan religions (Hos 2:7-8, 13).⁴⁰ However, in the Hebrew scriptures, the Song of Songs shows the relationship between God and God's people in another light. The piece seems to have its roots in the Canaanite psalms telling of the love between Anath and Baal. In the pagan culture the lovers were seen as equal. Unlike the Jewish relationship where God as the groom was active and Israel the bride was passive, here in the Canaanite relationship, there was a mutual way of being.⁴¹

Although the language of the Song is erotic and sensual it remained in the Hebrew Canon. It was accepted here only as an allegory between Yahweh and Israel. Christianity in its turn took up the Song and paralleled the love relationship in the Song between Christ and his bride the Church. Christianity then imposed its tradition of divine male dominance over female submissiveness using the song as an analogy.⁴² An example of this is to be found in Ephesians where Christ is head of the Church in the same way that the husband is head of his wife. In turn the wife is expected to be submissive to the husband in the same way that the Church is expected to be submissive to Christ (Eph 5:21).

According to Rosemary Ruether the outcome of this contrived analogy is the following:

As a model of human marriage, this relationship is so unrealistic as to suggest that the author (probably not Paul) is somewhat confused. He takes a symbol of the eschatological union of Christ and the Church,

⁴⁰ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, pp. 20-21.

⁴¹ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk*, pp. 139-140.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

which is actually antithetical to human marriage and sexuality, and tries to impose it inappropriately on human marriage in order to counteract the tendencies of the early Church to dissolve marriage into eschatological equality between celibate women and men. The author is caught midway between the Pauline eschatological vision of the Church and the reactionary direction of the household codes, which try to return the Christian Church to the models of historical patriarchy.⁴³

Ruether further develops this argument by saying that the Church as eschatological bride of Christ is continued in the early Fathers. The Church as bride of Christ brings forth offspring virginally and her offspring are also virginal. Real marriage is seen as far inferior to this kind of marriage between Christ and the Church. This way of thinking is clearly anti-sexual and anti-maternal. Negation of the sexual and maternal roles of women is the obvious outcome.⁴⁴ As usual, however, anything of a lower physical order that was lost in ordinary women was gained in the virginal mother. When Mary as the bride of Christ was taken over in the tradition it simply created an even greater theological divide between Mary and the rest of womankind. In the last analysis Mary as the bride of Christ and the Church as the bride of Christ creates a confusion of symbols which, for centuries has been typical of Marian theology.

What should be evident at this stage is that the brides of Christ symbolism and the Mary/Eve symbolism are undoubtedly sets of elements in the theotypical model of Marian theology. These elements serve a dual function. Firstly, they suggest that Mary is something of a divine entity creating a hiatus between Mary as woman and Mary as quasi-divinity. Secondly, they point to the difficulties of a tradition which strongly tends to portray God only in male terms. Very seldom in Catholic Christianity has God been officially portrayed in any other way. While the tradition would always give recognition to the fact that God is infinite, omnipotent and omnipresent it almost always portrays God as having the masculine rationale and

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

characteristics of a man. The Christian religions would have been served well if, in the words of the Scottish theologian Ruth Page, we had truly acted on the fact that "God is mystery. Whatever it is which we call God exceeds the finitude of human language, thought and being and is therefore mystery".⁴⁵

There is little evidence in the tradition that even minimal steps were taken in favour of revisioning patriarchal language about God. For too long the image of God the Father has received a massive amount of attention from the proponents, conscious or otherwise, of the patriarchal *status quo*. "The finitude of human language", as Page expresses it, has never seriously been taken into account in relation to a wider range of imagery. This preferential option taken long ago in favour of male imagery meant that the *feminine* qualities which should also have been attributed to God became lost making it impossible to uncover the *feminine* dimension of God.⁴⁶ Since the female has never stood for God in divine fullness the image of the female is expelled from holding any place in the doctrines concerning God. Rosemary Ruether claims that the only way in which female imagery is acceptable in relation to the divine is when it becomes the recipient of God's creation. This is precisely what has happened with the images of the Church, nature, the soul and finally Mary.⁴⁷ Reflection on Mary and the Church as brides of Christ portrays them as victims of this mind-set of female

⁴⁵ R. Page, *The Incarnation of Freedom and Love*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ With respect to an understanding of the use of the term *dimension* Elizabeth Johnson points out that "(speech) about God in female metaphors does not mean that God has a feminine dimension, revealed by Mary or other women. Nor does the use of male metaphors mean that God has a masculine dimension, revealed by Jesus or other men; or an animal dimension, revealed by lions or great mother birds; or a mineral dimension, which corresponds with naming God a rock. Images and names of God do not aim to identify merely "part" of the divine mystery, were that even possible. Rather, they intend to evoke the whole. Female imagery by itself points to God as such and has the capacity to represent God not only as nurturing, although certainly that, but as powerful, initiating, creating-redeeming-saving, and victorious over the powers of this world. If women are created in the image of God, then God can be spoken of in female metaphors in as full and as limited a way as God is imaged in male ones, without talk of feminine dimensions reducing the impact of this imagery". E. Johnson, *She Who Is*, p. 54.

⁴⁷ R. Ruether, "The Female Nature of God: A Problem in Contemporary Religious Life", *Conc* 143/3 (1981).

subordination. Certainly Mary and the Church are subordinate to God/Christ but we must image them as human not as divine.

Mary and Elements of the Divine

It is being claimed throughout this thesis that Mary cannot be imaged as divine in any way. Nor has she any greater capacity to reflect the divine than any other human being. For this reason it will be argued that the Catholic traditional tendency to turn to Mary to complement the deficiency of female imagery in the Godhead is a *non-sequitur*. One place where this has occurred has been in trinitarian theology and Mary's place within that. Maria Bingemer claims, for example, that a search for the feminine element in the Christian conception of God ought to begin with a journey into trinitarian theology.⁴⁸ It is not within the purview of this thesis to enter into the complexities of the Mystery of the Trinity but a reference to the part Mary plays in this scheme of things will reveal certain theotypical tendencies. Reference to Mary's place in the Trinity will be further developed in the final section of this chapter in relation to the work of the Latin American theologian Leonardo Boff.

Bingemer, for her part, reminds us that from the very beginning of the life of the eastern Church a harmonious balance was maintained between christology and pneumatology. All this flowed into the Church (ecclesiology) in a spiritual, liturgical and church organisational context. However, the western Church did not have the same sense of Spirit. Christology became detached from pneumatology with an emphasis bordering on *christomonism*.⁴⁹ Hence, the significance of the Holy Spirit became lost. As Bingemer puts it:

⁴⁸ M. Bingemer, "Women: Time and Eternity The Eternal Woman and the Feminine Face of God", Conc 6 (1991), pp. 98-107.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

In this context the strong point of theological reflection is its detached rationality, detached in its content, conceptual method and literary form from spirituality, symbol and poetry; the mystagogical element which ought to be present in all reflection and communication about the mystery of God is hard to detect, if not absent.⁵⁰

The significance of this absence, according to Bingemer, is that it has led to a search for a *substitute* to make up for the loss of the Spirit and all that this implies. An ecclesial life cannot function properly without the Spirit blowing where *It* wills. Bingemer goes on to say that the work of the Spirit is to generate life, sensitivity, gratuitousness and receptivity into human beings. An ecclesial community whose strengths are rational, logical and institutional will have great difficulty in touching the hearts of the people. Furthermore, it will never motivate people or make them feel loved, protected or consoled.⁵¹ The space left empty by pneumatology was eventually filled in the Catholic tradition by Mary of Nazareth where it has been said that she is spiritually present to guide and inspire. Mary is, thus, referred to as intercessor, helper, advocate, defender, mediatrix, counsellor and consoler. Yet, these properly belong to the Paraclete as is found in the scriptures (Jn 14:16; 15:26; 16:7). It transpires, therefore, that there has been a confusion in the minds of the faithful between the roles of Mary and the Spirit.

This confusion of ideas also flows into the relationship between Mary and the Trinity in general. The following statement from Elizabeth Johnson is evidence that, even she as the most learned of theologians, joins trinitarian and Marian symbols to the detriment of both disciplines when she explains that:

A surprisingly diverse number of scholars have proposed that one of the primary reasons for the dynamic growth of the Marian phenomenon throughout history lies in the symbolic power of her figure, which, precisely as a female representation, bears images of the

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

divine otherwise excluded from mainline Christian perception of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. In other words, female images of God arguably necessary for the full expression of the mystery of God but suppressed from official formulations, have migrated to the figure of this woman. Mary has been an icon of God. For innumerable believers she has functioned to reveal divine love as merciful, close, interested, always ready to hear and respond to human needs, trustworthy, and profoundly attractive, and has done so to a degree not possible when one thinks of God simply as a ruling male person or persons. Consequently,...what is actually being mediated is a most appealing experience of God.⁵²

Firstly, in favour of Johnson, it is obvious that she is attempting to portray the mystery of the Trinity in a more comprehensive, attractive and appealing way for those who feel the need of female images of God. She believes that if Mary is reflective of the female face of God then Marian theology and its attendant devotion have a part to play in "the crucial task of imaging God in inclusive fashion".⁵³ In this way Johnson hopes to mine the Marian tradition in order to retrieve female imagery and language about the mystery of God. In this respect, however, she has a word of warning. She wishes to remind us that the images mentioned above would never be enough to counter-balance the harm done by the patriarchal images of the divine. Images from other sources need to be retrieved.⁵⁴ Johnson also issues a second caution. That is, since Marian tradition has been shaped by patriarchy there is a fear that the Marian images will be stereotyped to suit the patriarchal tradition which has always been the case. These images will be helpful to the male but will again

⁵² E. Johnson, "Mary and the Female Face of God", TS 50 (1989), pp. 500-501.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 501.

⁵⁴ Johnson does not mention these other sources at this point in her essay but those images of God to be found in the works of Jurgen Moltmann, Dorothee Soelle, Paul Tillich and Sallie McFague would be just some of the possible examples that might bear relation to Johnson's ideas. Moltmann, for example uses the image of God as the "Motherly-Father". J. Moltmann, "The Motherly-Father - Is Trinitarian Patripassianism Replacing Theological Patriarchalism?", Conc 143/3 (1981), pp. 51-55. Soelle believes that there is not enough emphasis on the God of Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel. This is why many worship a being which reflects a male dominated culture of the past. D. Soelle, "Paternalistic Religion as Experienced by Woman", Conc 143/3 (1981), pp. 69-74. Tillich suggests that while the Father God offers redemption the Mother God gives life itself. P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 1, pp. 293-294. Sallie McFague says that blood, water and sex join forces with conception, gestation and birth which suggests a new type of creation story. S. McFague, *Models of God*, p. 106.

subordinate the female. Marian symbolism accordingly will function as a restricting imagery for women.⁵⁵ Some of what Johnson says in the citation above including her two provisos are in line with the main tenets of this thesis.

Secondly, however, those aspects of the citation which claim the overall part that Mary should continue to play in the tradition is a dubious one. Johnson believes that Mary can image the revelation of divine love, closeness, interest and trustworthiness. This, she says, is acceptable on the grounds that the symbols function to reveal the divine love as "always ready to hear and respond to human needs". In addition, Johnson also suggests that Mary "has been an icon for God"; that "the dynamic growth of the Marian phenomenon throughout history lies in the symbolic power of her figure" and that Mary as a "female representation, bears images of the divine otherwise excluded from the mainline Christian perception of God as Father, Son and Spirit", all are, "a most appealing experience of God". On the one hand, Johnson's desire to deconstruct and reconstruct a theology which is more-inclusive of female images of God is understandable. On the other hand, her treatment of Mary as the medium to make this possible is not. Otherwise Mary herself becomes part of the Godhead. Certainly, Mary may reflect the divinity of God but only in her capacity as a creature of God. Johnson, however, does not make clear that distinction. Mary may image the divine in her capacity as a human being but she may not image the divine as a divinity in the way that Christ does.

If we take, for example, some of the theotypical images such as Mary's Immaculate Conception, her perpetual virginity and her virginal motherhood we must question their significance in relation to the Godhead. What would Johnson make of these in her deconstruction and reconstruction process? Would Johnson believe it possible that

⁵⁵ E. Johnson, "Mary and the Female Face of God", TS 50 (1989), p. 525.

these images might contribute in some way to a more holistic understanding of God imaged as female? If so, where does this connect with Mary? A greater service would be done to Marian theology if Johnson attempted to apply her thesis to the plethora of other Marian symbols already in existence. This would include the numerous titles attributed to Mary, for example, in the Litany of Loreto.⁵⁶ Perhaps Johnson might be much more selective in her choice of Marian imagery were she to consider in greater depth which symbols should pertain to Mary and which should be transferred to the divine.

7. The Age of *Theotokos*

One important aspect of Marian symbolism to which Johnson does not refer in her retrieval approach concerns Mary's motherhood. Besides the titles outlined above the single most important title ever to have been bestowed on Mary in the history of the Catholic Church is that of Mary as *Theotokos* (more commonly known in traditional Catholic popular piety as *Mater Dei*). It is by far the most complex of Marian titles and for this reason it deserves a subsection on its own. There can be little doubt, however, that it would require a great deal more attention than it will receive here. Before launching into a brief history and theology of Mary as *Theotokos* one point needs to be made. That is, that Mary as the Mother of God is not the issue. What is at issue is the way in which she has been portrayed as a result of the misuse of the title itself. In other words Mary is not to be imaged simply as the mother of God. Rather, she is to be imaged as the *Mother of God Incarnate* (or *Mater Dei Incarnati*). All subsequent references to her in this respect, both in official Church teaching and Christian feminism, should be translated accordingly.

⁵⁶ Some examples of the well known Litany are as follows: "Holy Mary", "Holy Mother of God", "Holy Virgin of Virgins", "Mother of Christ", "Mother of Divine Grace", "Mother most pure", "Mother most chaste", "Mother inviolate", "Mother undefiled", "Mother most amiable" and so on.

Theotokos: The Background

It was the development of the title *Theotokos* more than anything else that helped to contribute to Mary's theotypical status. Irenaeus expressed his belief in the divine motherhood in terms which anticipated the title *Theotokos*. The *Theotokos* principle is related to Mary's virginity. For example, Irenaeus says that the "Son of God was born of a virgin".⁵⁷ When dealing with the virginal conception Irenaeus invokes the Hebrew scripture texts and figures. He wrote that Adam was fashioned from the virgin earth a type of the virgin birth. He also made a link between the stone cut not by human hands in Daniel 2:34 and the type of Mary's motherhood. According to Irenaeus another Old Testament text, one of Isaiah's, is to be linked with Mary's virginal motherhood. The text reads "(see), I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: One trusts will not panic" (Is 28:16).⁵⁸

At this early stage in Christianity Irenaeus was only hinting at Mary as *Theotokos* using the virginal conception as a means to do so. Mary is simply seen as the foundation of Jesus's coming into the world. She is the virgin who gave birth to the Son of God, the one who gave birth not of any man but by the overshadowing of the Spirit. She alone as Virgin Mother is the cornerstone and foundation for the special Child. The tradition was at too early a stage for Irenaeus to have claimed any more. Nonetheless, he laid the ground for the theology of the subsequent Fathers. The real debate on the divine maternity is due in no small measure to Cyril of Alexandria. He was the key figure responsible for the official pronouncement on Mary as *Theotokos* made by the Council of Ephesus (431 c.e.). Mary as *Theotokos* happened as the result of a controversy between Cyril and Nestorius bishop of Constantinople. While the

⁵⁷ Cited in M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 190.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

term itself had been in existence for well over a century the debate only came to a head when Cyril and Nestorius quarrelled.

The basis of their argument had arisen originally from two different schools of christology which had emerged in the aftermath of the Nicean Council (325 c.e.). A dualism in christology was promoted which is summed up in the following way by Dermot Lane:

On the one hand you had the Word-flesh (Logos-Sarx) approach coming out of Alexandria. Here the emphasis was on the divinity of Jesus with particular attention being given to the unity between the Word and the flesh in Jesus. In its extreme form the Word-flesh christology eliminated the presence of a human soul in Jesus. On the other hand there was a Word-man (Logos-anthropos) christology which came from Antioch. Within this scheme the emphasis is placed on the humanity without prejudice to the primacy of the divine Word in Jesus.⁵⁹

Nestorius took up this issue with great intensity. His Antiochene outlook led him to insist on Christ's manhood. He feared that what the human Christ did and suffered may in some way be attributed to the divine person. He became embroiled in idiomatic expression which claimed that the Word of God was *conjoined* to Jesus rather than united with him.⁶⁰

But it is one thing to say that the God who is the Word of the Father was conjoined to him who was born from Mary, which is perfectly clear and sound and cannot give scandal to the pagans, but quite another that the Deity needed a birth involving months (of pregnancy). Thus, God the Word, who was in the temple (i.e. the body) which the Spirit had prepared, is something quite different from the temple to be dissolved by death; it is also natural to him who indwells the temple to rise again. So Christ is really divided into a human and mortal, and a divine and immortal part: only the human part is the son of Mary, the divine part is the Son of God and not born of her.⁶¹

⁵⁹ D. Lane, *The Reality of Jesus*, p. 100.

⁶⁰ Cited in M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 111.

⁶¹ Cited in H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 1, p. 96.

According to Nestorius the human and the divine parts of Christ must be distinguished. This implied division in the nature of Christ. His insistence on the difference between the divinity and humanity in Christ had implications for the title of Mary as *Theotokos*. For Nestorius, Mary could only be the mother of the man *Anthropotokos* or the mother of Christ, *Christokos*, but on no account the Mother of God, *Theotokos*. He feared that if God was said to be born from Mary it would take Christianity dangerously close to paganism.⁶²

What was central here was not so much the greater or lesser devotion to Mary but rather the unity of the person of Christ. At this point Cyril of Alexandria entered the debate. As so often in Church history more than the simply theological was at issue. A century old rivalry between the two great sees of Alexandria and Constantinople were the background to the controversy. In 330 Constantinople had been made the capital of the Eastern Empire. At a subsequent Council its bishop had been given precedence above all others except the Bishop of Rome. Naturally, this upset the See of Alexandria. In addition, Cyril's uncle had persecuted John Chrysostom when he became bishop of Constantinople. Now Cyril following in his uncle's footsteps was about to strike a blow against Nestorius.⁶³

Cyril refuted the arguments of Nestorius. In a long encyclical addressed to his Egyptian monks he set out to prove Mary's right to the title *Theotokos*. He took arguments from the tradition of the Church asking how anyone could doubt the Holy Virgin to be *Theotokos* if Our Lord Jesus Christ was God? Both he and Nestorius wrote to Pope Celestine to inform him of their views on the matter. Celestine for his

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

part was already prejudiced against Nestorius for receiving followers of Pelagius a well known heretic at the time. Furthermore, the full Godhead of Christ had never been questioned in the West and Mary's divine maternity had never been doubted.⁶⁴ The outcome of the appeal to Rome ended in the summoning of the ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431 c.e. The Council condemned Nestorius and accepted the teaching of Cyril which is taken as official Church doctrine up until the present day.⁶⁵ Nestorius was condemned on two accounts. Firstly, that he refused to accept that the Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died and rose again. Secondly, he was condemned for refusing to call Mary the Mother of God *Theotokos* and for failing to acknowledge the divine and human properties in the one person of Jesus.⁶⁶

At the end of the session of the Council Nestorius was deposed and excommunicated. The crowds who had been roaming the streets of Ephesus awaiting the outcome of the debate went wild with excitement. Cyril and his bishops were accompanied to their lodgings in torchlight procession while the crowds were singing in praise of the *Theotokos*. Interestingly, in the streets of the same city almost 400 years before Paul of Tarsus had been shouted down when he condemned the Ephesian worshippers of the Goddess Diana. In doing so Paul had threatened the livelihood of the worshippers of the pagan Goddess at the time (Acts 19:28). It might not stretch the imagination too far to suggest that the veneration of a mother-figure had still been in the hearts of a simple people. The *Theotokos* might well have been taking the place of the ancient Diana.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ See, for example, John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Par. 4, p. 14.

⁶⁶ D. Lane, *The Reality of Jesus*, p. 102.

From Ephesus onwards very early glimmerings of the theotypical approach are beginning to emerge. However, at this early stage there is a notable distinction evident between the veneration due to Mary and the worship given to her Son. Any line of thought that might progress from devotion to worship was always kept in check officially. Very often this was due to the fact that many of the Fathers had to cope with heresies of a most unacceptable kind. Such as, the worship of the pagan female Goddess, whoever or wherever that Goddess might happen to be at the time. While it was easy enough for the learned Fathers to teach that Mary is the Mother of God it was much more difficult for a primitive people surrounded by various pagan religions to comprehend the nuance.

There is an inherent question to the term *Theotokos* itself. That is, which comes first the chicken or the egg? If Mary is the mother of God then in the nature of things she must have been born before God. On the other hand, how is it possible for her to be the mother of God if she were one of God's creatures? The answer, of course, is that Mary is not the mother of God, but the mother of God incarnate. However, the tradition never seems to portray this all important point in its translations. Neither the English, Greek (*Theotokos*) or the Latin (*Mater Dei*) have ever been translated to include the term *incarnate*. Such is the case in official documents even today. What appears to have happened is that the absence of a more inclusive translation led to a literal translation of the term. It is not surprising, then, that in the time of the Fathers it was difficult for them to keep the idea of Mary as mother of God away from the idea of Mary as Goddess.

The Development of *Theotokos*

Shortly before the Council of Ephesus Epiphanius had one such problem. He had to deal with a sect known as the Collyridians who consisted mostly of women living in Thracia and Upper Scythia. They were evidently influenced by old pagan customs. He writes:

Certain women adorn a chair or a square throne, spread a linen cloth over it, and on a certain day of the year place bread on it and offer it in the name of Mary, and all partake of this bread.⁶⁷

Here is an echo of the worship of the Great Mother *Magna Mater* reflected in Mary. Epiphanius refutes the practice on the ground that no woman can exercise priestly functions, not even Mary herself. He then makes a distinction between the type of worship we owe to God and the type of devotion which is due to Mary. He explains:

Now the body of Mary was indeed holy, but it was not God; the Virgin was indeed a virgin and revered, but she was not given us for worship, but herself worshipped him who was born in the flesh from her...Honour Mary, but let the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be worshipped, but let no one worship Mary...even though Mary is most beautiful and holy and venerable, yet she is not to be worshipped.⁶⁸

Ambrose had been another of the Fathers who had to develop his doctrine of Mary against the pagan worship of the Great Mother. His opposition was with the Arian heresy and the worship of Kybele. The danger of raising Mary to the level of Goddess was too great while the cult of Kybele was still flourishing. For this reason Ambrose had an aversion to using the term *Mater Dei* the Latin equivalent of *Theotokos*. Nonetheless, he makes it clear that Mary is in fact the Mother of God because she had given birth to God.⁶⁹ A Christmas hymn which he taught his followers goes as

⁶⁷ Cited in H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 1, p. 73.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

follows "(come) Redeemer of the nations, show forth the birth of the Virgin; let all the world marvel, such a birth befitted God".⁷⁰

Ambrose establishes with absolute certainty Mary's divine motherhood but totally repels any idea that might lead to some misunderstanding about her as a divine entity. While she carries his mystical body in her womb her body is no more than the vessel or the temple where the divine reigns. Even here she is only the Mother of God's humanity not the Mother of God's divinity. He explains that "Christ could not, however, have a mother according to His divine nature, because He is His Mother's Creator. He was made, not by divine, but rather by human generation. Because he was made man, God was born".⁷¹

Emerging Theatypology

Ambrose's well known phrase "Mary was the temple of God, not the God of the temple"⁷² sums up the entire difficulty with the Mother of God theme in the tradition. Never at any stage in the early tradition is Mary seen by the Fathers as someone who is worshipped for her own sake. The most she receives is a superlative form of devotion but the line is a fine one which has been all but broken by the early Middle Ages. The importance of the divine motherhood cannot be overstated. Cyril Vollert echoing the same idea in modern times would say that the divine maternity is the bond which unites Mary with Christ for all eternity.⁷³ For, she is the perfect mother and entirely mother where all her energies are centred on him and his mission. She is the only mother in the world who is capable of existing exclusively for her Son. This

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Ambrose, "On the Death of His Brother Satyrus", Fathers 22, p. 166.

⁷² Ambrose, "The Holy Spirit", Fathers 44, p. 181.

⁷³ C. Vollert, *A Theology of Mary*, p. 37.

is because he is the only Son in the world who is God. For Vollert no other mother can match this relationship. He says that:

The divine motherhood is not an ordinary motherhood. The Word existed eternally before Mary was born. He chose her as his mother and by becoming incarnate in her contracted with her a bond that has no equivalent in ordinary motherhood and that recalls, while it incomparably transcends, the bond that exists between spouses. Thus, Mary's association with Christ stems from the incarnation of the Word in her womb, from her divine maternity.⁷⁴

Vollert wrote this in 1965. In the centuries between the Middle Ages and then a tremendous devotion waxed and waned to the *Theotokos*. By the early Middle Ages up until its demise at the time of the Enlightenment the use of the term subtly tied Mary's name to that of possessing divine essence. Mary Condren writing in her book *The Serpent and the Goddess* ⁷⁵ says that the twelfth century would see a great rise in the cult and devotion to Mary. In Irish culture, for example, she was imaged as the protector of sinners and the calming antidote to a vengeful God. She could be counted upon to put pressure on the Father in favour of her people. Mary was like the ancient Goddesses who bared their breasts to calm the wrath of the warriors. Mary as mother too could be depended upon to remind God that God was once nursed by her. The milk from her breast could now calm his wrath. Mary was the powerful one who was capable of keeping the divinities in check. If God were slow to show justice Mary simply reminded God of "his" human origins and of the necessity for "him" to suckle as a child.⁷⁶

Condren makes it clear, however, that this was a type of Irish devotion belonging to Irish folklore. The Church did not altogether welcome popular devotion of that kind.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷⁵ M. Condren, *The Serpent and the Goddess*, p. 162.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

While the Fathers in the early Middle Ages such as Anselm, Aquinas and Peter Damian certainly promoted the cult of Mary they were careful to draw the line so as not to diminish the sacrifice of Jesus. A mere woman, *Theotokos* or not, could never be allowed to usurp the role of Christ. However, although they were acutely aware of the dangers the Fathers also knew of the enormous benefits that could be gained from promoting the cult. After all Mary was the human face of God. She was there to make the harsh salvific doctrines of Church teaching more tolerable.⁷⁷

Condren also has it that there was another reason for promoting the cult of the *Theotokos*. This in its turn played down both the intrinsic worth of ordinary women and motherhood. Since Mary is the woman who has nourished and given life to God she is much more a mother than normal biological function would suggest. Many of the monastics, therefore, could feel free to repudiate their own mothers and turn their backs on their familial responsibilities. They could project their dislike of the female sex on to ordinary women and live a celibate life while finding erotic compensation in that perfectly heavenly creature, Mary, the Mother of God. For as long as celibate men could not have earthly women Mary provided the ideal female substitute who was free from sin, obedient to God in every way and was available to them whenever they cared to project their fantasies upon her.⁷⁸

It could be argued that the Fathers habitual use of the Mother of God in this way encouraged a devotion to Mary that escalated beyond anything they wished to see happen. Hilda Graef gives an account of the extraordinary lengths to which many people were prepared to go in their adulation of Mary. In the Byzantine Church, ever since the time of Constantine, the emperors as well as the professional theologians

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

had become concerned with theological matters. The emperor Leo VI (d. 912), for example, took time away from the affairs of the State to engage in mariological writings. In one of his several homilies on the *Theotokos* he emphasises Mary's birth from sterile parents claiming that she was not born entirely from the will of flesh and blood. He images her as the lily among thorns in the wickedness of human confusion in an earth that had only produced thorns but now bears fruit since her existence. Leo's theotypical connotations go further when he claims that Mary is now estranged from the earth because of her inseparability from her Son. Nonetheless, Mary is still capable of assisting those in need. Leo compares Mary to the Ark in saying that where the Ark itself was often in danger and could itself be captured, Mary on the other hand, would never fail to give assistance if she so willed.⁷⁹

Another theotypical strain which comes out very clearly in Euthymius (d. 917) Leo's confessor and later Patriarch of Constantinople is one which was mentioned earlier in relation to the Spirit. That is, certain actions are attributed to Mary which properly belong to Christ. In a homily on the conception of St. Anne (Mary's mother) Euthymius calls Mary "the royal throne, the incomprehensible ark who will destroy the sanctuaries of the idols and the irrational sacrifices of the Hebrews, who will manifest the great and hidden mystery".⁸⁰ Here Euthymius applies to Mary what is said of Christ in Ephesians 2:14 since Mary "will call back our forefathers and every just soul from Hades...who will sanctify the whole world...and destroy all heresies".⁸¹ Furthermore, Mary is superior to all other heavenly and earthly creatures. She is the consoler of those who are in despair because of the multitude of their sins. Mary is always present to those who care to pray in her sanctuary and fills them with good

⁷⁹ H. GRAEF, *MARY: A HISTORY OF DOCTRINE AND DEVOTION*, VOL I, PP. 196-195.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

things while admonishing sinners. With her girdle that she wore around her waist she has suffocated the serpent while overthrowing the altars of the idol. The relic of her girdle is brighter than the rays of the sun and more powerful than the heavens.⁸²

These near God-like characteristics attributed to Mary by Euthymius are surpassed by another important exponent of Byzantine Mariology, John the Geometer (d.c. 990 who is believed to have been a monk-priest or archbishop of the time). The Geometer portrays the *Theotokos* above all in her queenly, heavenly glory. What is significant about his approach is that he sees the part played by Mary in the redemption to be of equal value to that of her Son and possibly even greater. What the Geometer does is to take a christatypical theme, Mary as co-Redeemer, and theatypify it. This means in effect that Christ's role is so closely tied in with Mary's that he is being used as a stepping stone to push Mary ever more closely into the Godhead. Mary's own important, personal contribution to the redemption is expressed by the Geometer to Jesus in the following way:

that you have not only given yourself as a ransom for us, but, after yourself, have given also your mother as a ransom at every moment, so that you indeed have died for us once, but she died a million times in her will, cauterized in her heart just as for you, so also for those for whom she, just like the Father, has given her own Son and knew him to be delivered unto death.⁸³

Firstly, the implication from this statement is that Mary would have suffered even more than Christ for the sins of humanity. At this stage it is not easy to see, in the Geometer's mind, the difference between the Christ who effects redemption and the role played by Mary. Secondly, Mary is approximated to the Godhead while taking part in some way in the divine transcendence. The Geometer sees Mary as the woman who has given birth to One of the Trinity. The Trinity itself is Mary's root and

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

principle. She is so radiant that she frightens all the other heavenly creatures whom she is far above in intelligence and understanding. She is fiery, perfectly immaterial, sweet but frightening and invisible. She even outshines the light of all the seraphim put together. She is a completely other transcendent figure hardly comparable to the young woman of Nazareth.⁸⁴ John the Geometer also picks up the Holy Spirit theme when he says that not only did Mary share in the redemptive work of her Son but as *another paraclete* she surpasses human nature to become the mediatrix of all humanity. She is another paraclete who reconciles us to God and appeases "his" wrath.⁸⁵

By the twelfth century the statements concerning Mary's position ever more strongly serve the theatypical cause. Yet, again they are related to what would be normally termed christatypical. The Benedictine abbot Arnold of Bonneval (d.c. 1156) from Chartres considered the glory of the Mother and the Son to be indivisible. They both divide the mercy of offices between them. Where Christ shows his wounds to the Father Mary shows her breasts to him.⁸⁶ Mary also shares the suffering on the cross in her work of redemption. Bonneval speaks of an indivisible unity between Christ and Mary where Mary is recognised as his equal. It is clear that his understanding of the indivisibility of Mary and Christ does not subordinate Mary to Christ in any way. Hence, the theatypical approach comes to the centre of the stage. The following statement makes the point when Bonneval claims that Christ:

was moved by the affection of his mother; then there was one single will of Christ and Mary, both together one holocaust to God: she in the blood of her heart, he in the blood of his flesh...Christ is the Lord, Mary the Mistress...For she is set over every creature, and whoever

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

bends his knee to Jesus also bows in supplication to his Mother...Nor can the Mother be separated from the dominion and power of the Son. One is the flesh of Mary and Christ, one the spirit, one the charity...This unity allows no division, nor is it divided into parts, and even though one is made out of two, this cannot henceforth be divided, and I consider the glory of the Son and the Mother not so much a common glory, but the same.⁸⁷

Another writer of the same mind as Bonneval is Richard of St. Laurent (d.c. 1245) who goes even further in assuming Mary's place in the Godhead. In his Marian doctrine and devotion Richard applies the Lord's prayer to Mary when he writes "Our Mother who art in heaven, give us our daily bread".⁸⁸ It should be noted at this point that Mary is obviously seen by St. Laurent as a feminine face of God. Here Mary herself is an aspect of the divinity. Furthermore, he writes "Mary so loved the world, that is sinners, that she gave her only-begotten Son for the salvation of the world".⁸⁹ This is a theme surely reminiscent of God's gift of Jesus to the world in John's gospel "(for) God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

In addition, St. Laurent goes on to invest Mary with omnipotence. He says that a special omnipotence is given to her in all the three realms of earth, hell and heaven. She is the Queen of these realms and accordingly has equal rights with the King of the realms. The power of the Mother and the Son are one and the same. Her omnipotence is at its greatest in her power to free all those who are already within the devil's grasp. She has the power to bring them back to life so that they may do penance.⁹⁰ Mary's power even extends over that of Christ himself for while she can only effectively

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

implore him to save the world she can also command him by her maternal authority.⁹¹

By the time of the later Middle Ages Mariology had become, in fact, Mariolatry. One of the most popular preachers, Bernardine of Siena (d. 1444) was among those who went to astonishing lengths in his treatises on Mary. His pious exaggerations led to absurdities. Even when Mary was still in the womb she had the use of her own free will. From the time of the Annunciation she knew everything perfectly that pertained to the mystery of the Incarnation. She even became more and more independent of Christ. Not only this but the Virgin in some respects becomes superior to the Godself.⁹² As Bernardine states:

The Blessed Virgin could do more concerning God than God could do concerning himself...Now, God came to the Virgin, and it was necessary for the Virgin to give birth, and to none other than God, and not by any other than God. Now God, could only generate God from himself; and yet the Virgin made a Man. God could only generate someone infinite, immortal, eternal, impassible, impalpable, invisible, in the form of God; but the Virgin made him finite, mortal, poor, temporal, palpable, sentient, visible, in the form of a servant, in a created nature...O the unthinkable power of the Virgin Mother!...One Hebrew woman invaded the house of the eternal King; one girl, I do not know by what caresses, pledges or violence, seduced, deceived and, if I may say so, wounded and enraptured the divine heart and ensnared the Wisdom of God...Surely it was quite impossible for God to do such a thing by himself.⁹³

So it goes on through the Middle Ages. Mary's power knows no bounds. One final example is seen in the work of Jean-Jacques Olier (d. 1657). He was the founder of the seminary at St. Sulpice. He considers the relation between the Father and the blessed Virgin to be a real marriage in which the person and possessions of the husband belong to the wife. This means that God has arranged our salvation

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 315-316.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

according to the views of Mary. He is no longer the First Cause but his will depends on hers.⁹⁴ As well as being the spouse of the Father Mary is also the spouse of the glorified Christ "and now, in heaven 'it seems to me that Jesus and Mary are wholly consummated into one and are but one thing'".⁹⁵ Even the power of Jesus is curtailed by Mary's power when God places his omnipotence in the hands of his mother so that she may use it as she wishes. She can use this power to do good or she can use it to bind the power of Jesus Christ to prevent the evil he would do to the guilty!⁹⁶

The above are but few of the examples which could have been chosen to make the point that a theotypical Marian theology was very much in vogue during the greater part of the Middle Ages. What has become evident at this stage is that there are times when it is difficult to divide neatly the theotypical from the christotypical at that particular time. This was due to a desire to ensconce Mary, through Christ, into the Godhead thus turning christotypical ideas into theotypical ones. This means specifically that for as long as Mary is spoken of in relation to Christ she is placed on a par with him. However, there were times when things went further especially where it was shown that Christ was even relegated to second place while Mary took her place beside the Father.

8. A Contemporary Theatypology

There have been other areas within the tradition where Mary has truly reached divine status although these cannot be pursued here. One example is to be found in the

⁹⁴ H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 2, pp. 35-36.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

poetry of the Irish and Scottish bards from around the 12th to the 17th centuries.⁹⁷ Much more recently, however, the Latin American liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff has gone very far towards attributing divine status to Mary. His approach is certainly theatypical since he actually writes of a *hypostatic union* between a divine person of the Trinity and Mary. Boff's understanding of Mary and her relationship with the Trinity through the *hypostatic union* is to be found in his book *Mary the Maternal Face of God*.⁹⁸ While the term *hypostatic union* has been used in the tradition to explain the relationship between Jesus and the Father Boff extrapolates thereby drawing a parallel between Mary and the Holy Spirit. This is a novel hypothesis which assumes that the feminine dimension of the Spirit has an affinity with the person of the virgin Mary.⁹⁹

Leonardo Boff: The Immaculate Conception

Central to Boff's thesis is his understanding of the Immaculate Conception and the virginal motherhood. Boff maintains that the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary contains a secret meaning. Through Mary's Immaculate Conception God has begun to create a new humanity free from all sin. Here is a perfectly sinless woman who has been prepared by God as a receptacle for God's own sinless Son. As Boff puts it:

In her, the feminine, charged with divinity, reaches its fullness. Still a virgin, she becomes a mother, and conceives God the Son. The secret, ultimate meaning of the Immaculate Conception lies not in Mary, but in God's wish to become incarnate. God determines to communicate

⁹⁷ See James Mackey's reference to this in "The Use and Abuse of Mary in Roman Catholicism", WNF, p. 116. See also the various references to Mary's Images in the Irish bardic poem cited by OsbornBergin. O. Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, pp. 254-257.

⁹⁸ L. Boff, *The Maternal Face of God*, Collins, 1989.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Johnson points out that the three translations for spirit are *ruah* which is grammatically of feminine gender and is a Hebrew word; *pneuma* which is grammatically neuter, a Greek word and *spiritus* which is Latin and grammatically masculine. E. Johnson, *She Who Is*, p. 83.

the divine self totally. God prepares a living temple as dwelling place. God enters it, assumes it, and renders it divine. This preparation for the future spiritualization of humanity is the meaning and scope of the Immaculate Conception.¹⁰⁰

Mary's Immaculate Conception is as important to Boff as it has been to the tradition. The Son of God could not have dwelt in any receptacle that was tainted by sin. Not that Mary suffered any less than other human beings in life. Mary suffered severely but she knew how to accept her sufferings and transcend them in her desire for God. Rather than diminishing her life the human condition charged Mary's life with potential. The grace within Mary helped her to anticipate the destiny of all humanity. It is due in no small measure to Mary that we have the certitude that God has not abandoned us in our disgrace. We are always surrounded by the love of Mary in such a way that she is our new departure and our fresh start.¹⁰¹

Moreover, in Boff's work Mary's Immaculate Conception is more than just a particular view of the necessity of Mary's sinlessness. It is symbolic of humanity's search for perfect identity where a future kingdom of peace, justice, harmony and community reign. In Mary conceived without sin the Christian faith sees the historicisation of a hope that is to be found in the Hebrew scriptures. The people of hope are the beloved spouse of God (Hos 2; Jer 31:17-22; Is 54:4-8). Yet, they are a people who constantly fall into adultery because they are not capable of fidelity. Mary, on the other hand, is the pure spouse of God's pure love. Mary is for us the culmination of humanity and the coronation of Israel. Boff summarises his understanding of Mary's position in the following way when he writes "(at) long last, a creature has appeared in the universe who is pure goodness. Now the desert blooms, now the tree of life produces flowers that do not wither before summer".¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ L. Boff, *The Maternal Face of God*, pp. 132-133.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 128-131.

Leonardo Boff: The Virginal Conception

Besides the Immaculate Conception the other area central to Boff's thesis is that of Mary's virginal conception. He upholds the perpetual virginity of Mary as it is taught in the tradition because he sees it as the seed of divinised humanity. He accepts the fact that the Incarnation of God would not of itself have been bound to a virginal conception. God could have just as easily engendered someone through human love to be the Incarnation of the Son. God Incarnate in this way would not have been any less the Saviour or any less the Son of God.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, Boff prefers to go against any argument based on the grounds of natural biology. Instead, he emphasises that the doctrine on Mary's virginity does greater justice to our forebears in the faith. In this regard Boff asks:

Is it only and solely the divinity and the uniqueness of Jesus, the human God that the primitive Christian community sought to profess through its doctrine of the virgin birth? We think not. Further, Mary's relationship with the Holy Spirit would never have come to light - that relationship in light of which new theological perspectives are opened in terms of self communication of the Spirit analogous to that of the Son.¹⁰⁴

Boff's evidence of the virginal conception is related to the marriage of Mary and Joseph. If Joseph had been the actual father of Jesus then he would have been accorded a role in salvation history with a veneration of Joseph equal to that of Mary. Boff believes that there was no such disclosure of divine revelation. Joseph's role was none other than a lateral and juridical one quite distinct from that of Mary's in the true parental sense. For, "(when) God determined to communicate the divine self substantially and absolutely, God's path to the world passed not by way of marriage, but by way of virginity".¹⁰⁵ Boff, like those before him, returns to the texts of Luke

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

1:35 and Matthew 1:18 to make his case. These texts, he says, cannot be dismissed simply as variations of myths in pre-existent cultures. Boff reasons that the New Testament, unlike the shameless myths, does not deal with sexual relations. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit does not appear as a father but as a generative force (Lk:1-35). The life of Jesus comes from the creative power of God and the free acceptance of Mary. It does not come from any kind of sexual activity.¹⁰⁶

Leonardo Boff: The Divine Motherhood

Ultimately, what is of the greatest significance to Boff's thesis is the divine motherhood which is based on Mary's perpetual virginity. Her participation in the divine activity allowed the eternal God to become "linked to all of humanity by an umbilical cord".¹⁰⁷ It has already been said that Boff emphasises the virginity of Mary in much the same way as it is emphasised in the tradition. However, Boff has a novel reason for emphasising the virginity of Mary and it is here that his theatypical approach becomes most apparent. The basis of his argument lies in the traditionally held belief that since Mary's motherhood is divine it is stretched between two poles. At one end of the spectrum is the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Mary at the moment of her conception. As he points out "(the) Spirit dwelt within her, assumed her, and lifted her to the level of divinity".¹⁰⁸ At the other end of the spectrum is found the belief that Jesus is true God. Mary engendered a human being who is also God. She engendered the true God through her relationship in union with the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

In Boff's mind there is a causal nexus between the divinisation of Mary and the divinisation of the fruit conceived in Mary's womb. Developing this train of thought, Boff goes on to say that the "flesh that Mary has bestowed on Jesus is the flesh of God. Accordingly, something of Mary's femininity has been hypostatically assumed by God".¹¹⁰ This gives the feminine an eternal dimension so that "in Jesus the feminine is God"...and..."(in) Jesus the feminine has been divinised".¹¹¹ Once Boff has hold of the reins he keeps going. By a complex yet determined system of argumentation he suggests that "God can divinise the feminine, as the divine Persons are capable of hypostatically assuming a concrete human nature, and human nature has the obediential potency to be so assumed".¹¹² Given that it was only Mary and no other woman who was hypostatically assumed she "became the virgin Mother of God...assumed body and soul into heaven...and is co-Redemptrix and co-Mediatrix of salvation".¹¹³

A pen-ultimate leap follows:

The divinizer of the *masculine* (with the feminine) is the Word. The divinizer of the *feminine* (with the masculine) is the Holy Spirit. The Christ-Adam and Mary-Eve parallels find their perfect symmetry here. Mary is not beneath Jesus, but beside him. Together they translate absolutely what it means to say that the human being is the image of God. The Son and the Holy Spirit together, in time, show the loving and mysterious face of the Father in the flesh.¹¹⁴

At this stage it is clear that for Boff the Holy Spirit is the key to the divine co-redeeming powers of Mary. He believes that Mary not only received the effects of the

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Holy Spirit in her life as, indeed, everyone might "but that she specifically received the very person and godhead of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity".¹¹⁵ When Mary accepts the motherhood of the Saviour she is given the fullness of the Spirit's presence and activity in the world. Such a *spiritualisation* of Mary is not, for Boff, an end in itself. Rather it occurs within the mystery of redemption and the divinisation of humanity. The eternal Son in his turn "inaugurates the 'verbification' of the world".¹¹⁶ Therefore, "Mary is raised to the level of God in order to be able to engender God". Only the divine can engender the divine...Mary is assumed by the Holy Spirit, and thus elevated to the level of God".¹¹⁷

Boff has reasons for his controversial theatypology. He is a liberation theologian embroiled in the hot-bed of political intrigue and strife in a country teeming with poor and oppressed. Like so many more in Latin America Boff is in walking fear of his life. For this reason he is acutely aware of the plight of women in particular whom he knows to be doubly oppressed on the basis of their sexuality. Boff's hope, therefore, is to give women direct access to the divine through the Spirit. The physical resemblance of men to Jesus has ensured that they have never had difficulty in relating to the divine on the basis of their sex. For Boff, it is essential, therefore, that women also see themselves reflected in some way in the divine. This is why Mary is raised to the level of divinity through her hypostatisation in the Holy Spirit. When Boff speculates Mary as the feminine face of God he simply seeks sexual reciprocity in the divine from a tradition which has so often denied it.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

However, there are some serious difficulties with Boff's theatypical approach. Elizabeth Johnson, for example, makes the point that there is an endemic difficulty with the Spirit theology of the West. If the Spirit is to be considered the feminine aspect of the divine we are likely to end up with an amorphous feminine third. Her reason is that the Third Person has remained rather unclear and invisible in the tradition. The Father and the Son can be imaged in some way but the Spirit is a faceless *person* that is difficult to image. Since the overall framework of the Trinity imaged in this way remains androcentric the male principle is still dominant and sovereign forcing the feminine image into subordination. One reason for this is that the Third Person proceeds from the Father and Son "and is sent by them to mediate their presence and bring to completion what they have mediated".¹¹⁸

Another difficulty in Boff's thesis is that he uses Mary's Virginal Motherhood on which to base his theatypology. The perpetual virginity has been questioned seriously by too many scholars for it to be a realistic foundation for any new Marian theology.¹¹⁹ If the perpetual virginity of Mary and the virgin birth become any less acceptable in the tradition in the future then Boff's entire thesis falls apart. Besides, there are two more major difficulties with Boff's theatypical approach. Firstly, Boff's Marian theology does not encourage constructive articulation for the search of female images in the divine. To say that Mary is the feminine face of God is bad theology: theology? If we say that Mary is the feminine face of God then logically we must also say that Jesus is the masculine face of God. Thereby we return Jesus part and parcel to the structure of the patriarchal tradition. What is long overdue is some kind of theology that brings out female aspects of the divine in the Trinity but imaging Mary

¹¹⁸ E. Johnson, *She Who Is*, p. 50.

¹¹⁹ In relation to the questions surrounding the virginal conception Raymond Brown says, for example, that "we may have to settle for the answer that the biblical evidence does not resolve them, precisely because the Bible was not written for that purpose". R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, p. 517. See also, R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, pp. 34-56.

as the female element is not the answer. Despite the teachings and reservations of the Second Vatican Council theotypology is alive and well in contemporary Marian theology if Boff's work is anything to go by.

At this stage it should be fairly evident that there is a history of theotypology in the Catholic tradition which has been in existence for many centuries. Specifically, at this juncture, it should be pointed out that it is, therefore, surprising that feminist theology, for the most part, has not attempted to take this more seriously by imaging Mary as the feminine face of God. In contemporary times Boff has certainly laid the groundwork for those who would wish to claim it. What is even more surprising is that Rosemary Ruether has not done so. Ruether has written a great deal on the relationship between the ancient Egyptian Goddess and Mary but she makes little use of a Marian theology which would raise Mary to the level of the divine. Ruether follows the history of the Goddess in the matriarchal religions often making strong links between the Goddess and Mary. However, she does not draw the expected conclusion. That is, a manifestation of some kind of theotypical methodology. Having said this Ruether does not write without some ambiguity. It will become evident in a survey of her Goddess discussion that she is inclined, at times, to incorporate certain theotypical themes into her Marian theology. Nonetheless, while these ambiguities will be treated of in the next chapter it will be shown in the final chapter that Ruether's Mary is not to be interpreted as either divine or quasi-divine. What follows immediately is an outline of the development of Ruether's Goddess discussion and where it connects with Marian theology. The next chapter will also treat of an understanding of christatypology and Ruether's work in relation to that approach.

YOU HAVE FOUND FAVOUR WITH GOD

____Part Three____

9. Goddess Talk

There can be little doubt that the theotypical approach is to be avoided as a way of imaging Mary if she is to be understood in the fullness of her humanity. In honouring this belief the first half of the present chapter will claim that Mary's *favour with God* (Lk 1: 30) is neither about presenting her as the feminine dimension of God nor is it about treating her as a divinity in any respect. Clearly theaptypology encouraged a way of thinking about Mary that set her apart not only from women but from all of humankind. This legacy is echoed in a warning issued by Kari Borresen who fears that some feminists might be pacified by the imaging of Mary as a feminine face of the divine. Borresen refers to the divinising of Mary as a noxious deviation which could otherwise be termed as heretical.¹ Ruether, who is of much the same mind-set as Borresen, however, is the exemplary theologian for this thesis. She believes that it is not tenable to retrieve Mary as a divinity either through Marian theology or Marian symbolism.²

On the above basis, therefore, it will be argued that Ruether is not a theotypical theologian. Nor did theaptypology itself evolve from a vacuum. There is evidence in Ruether's work that the ancient Near Eastern Goddess mythologies of pagan times

¹ K. Borresen, "Mary in Catholic Theology", Conc 168 (1983), p. 50.

² It is important to note, however, that Ruether sees the need for female images of God. She points out that there is a legitimacy in encountering the divine as Goddess but feminist theology cannot always depend on the exegesis of tradition. What is necessary is a primal re-encounter with divine reality while at the same time not necessarily losing touch with certain aspects of the tradition. R. Ruether, "Feminist Theology in the Academy", ChrCris 45/3 (1985), p. 61. See also, R. Ruether, "Feminist Hermeneutics, Scriptural Authority and Religious Experience: The Case of the *Imago Dei* and Gender Equality", RPluralism, The Cross Publishing Company, 1991.

form a backdrop to Marian theology as witnessed in the theatypical approach. Therefore, some account of that broader perspective must be taken here. Ruether stakes a claim to this relationship in her book entitled *Womanguides*.³ While the Babylonian and Greek Goddesses are reflected in some way in theatypology Egyptian Goddess mythology was by far the strongest influence. A significant point, however, is to be made regarding Ruether's *modus operandi*. As a general principle Ruether's feminist *oeuvre* portrays an historical-critical analysis. However, in *Womanguides* she entertains picture-making and the telling of feminist midrashes⁴ as proof-texts to substantiate her theology. Thus, there is evidence that Ruether changes her method to suit her aim. Whether or not Ruether's sometimes transitory approach makes for good theology is a debate for another time. However, passing reference will be made to it below lest the reader of this thesis not be aware of Ruether's sometimes diverse manner of writing.

Before a revision of the Goddess symbolism in question and its relationship to theatypology can take place it will be necessary to look at Goddess feminism itself. From here it will become evident that any attempt to redeem Mary for Christian feminism by using such an approach is not tenable. This chapter will begin by taking a look at Goddess feminism from Ruether's point of view keeping in mind that while Ruether herself is not a Goddess feminist she believes that the quest within non-biblical⁵ religion, ancient or modern, is an authentic and ethical quest for liberating

³ R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, Beacon Press, 1985.

⁴ For a detailed account of pagan art forms of the Mother Goddess in relation to Marian theology see M. Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, Pan Books, 1976.

⁵ Ruether also believes that the Bible can be used as a source of liberating paradigm provided biblical tradition is constantly re-evaluated. However, new contexts have to be considered if there is to be a critical awareness of the Word of God. Ruether claims, therefore, that we must beware of the fact that the Bible was written and shaped by men. Much of its interpretation came about as a result of male experience which was limited by the patriarchal culture in which they lived. For this reason Ruether turns also to Goddess feminism to enhance her research. R. Ruether, "Feminist Interpretations: A Method of Correlation", *FIB*, pp. 116-117.

religious spirituality.⁶ Following this discussion it will then be shown that parallels also exist between the Mother Goddess and female images of God in the Hebrew scriptures. Judaism, for its part, in absorbing this feminine symbolism proceeded to suppress it so that the feminine in the divine appeared only in hidden and allegorical ways. By the time Christianity came into existence female symbols of God were all but extinct with Mary filling the area left vacant by the suppression of the Goddess.

Goddess Feminism

Ruether would respect that while feminist theologians have many differences they share common perspectives and values. They are committed to the promotion of women as autonomous persons and the dismantling of class and race hierarchies. Furthermore, Ruether criticises those Christians and Jews who believe that it is apostasy to go beyond the limits of their own religion to the Goddess discussion. Her reason is as follows:

I regard Goddess spirituality as the religious and ethical quest of women who regard traditional patriarchal religions not only as uncongenial to women but as the root of necrophilic values that threaten life on earth.⁷

With this in mind Ruether envisages a feminist ecumenical dialogue which embraces Jewish, Christian and Goddess feminism. Her foundational premise is a mutual respect for an authentic feminist spiritual quest within each of the traditions. She notes, however, that maintaining the dialogue will be a difficult one because our society and our Churches are becoming increasingly conservative. Goddess feminists, for example, are likely to be labelled as *witches* (read *satanists*). Unfortunately, more and more biblical feminists in the future will be pressurised into repudiating other

⁶ R. Ruether, "Female symbols, values and context", *ChrCris* 46/19 (1987), pp. 460-463.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 460-461.

women who are in organisations such as the Wicca movement.⁸ Ruether reiterates that biblical feminists must resist any pressure of this nature because the dialogue between biblical and Goddess feminism is essential to the birth of a new human future. The dialogue must take place within a framework of mutual respect while attempting to clarify the key differences in the respective religions.⁹

Ruether's desire for an ecumenical dialogue with those in Goddess feminism stretches to an empathetic understanding of their cause. Her empathy originates in her own experience of alienation with the patriarchal image of God so often portrayed in the scriptures and tradition. Given Ruether's difficulties with the biblical patriarchal God she understands why Goddess feminists revolted against "Him" in the 1970's. They began to develop an increasingly militant wing which identified patriarchal religion as the root of the problem of women's subordination. Efforts to create a more *androgynous* God within the biblical religions would be a waste of time in the eyes of these women since any female image of God developed would always be male centred. Therefore, they reject biblical religion substituting it for a Goddess/nature religion which they believe existed in matriarchal society prior to the rise of patriarchy.¹⁰ In addition, they hold a belief that the witches of the Middle Ages,

⁸ See, for example, Miriam Simos, *The Spiral Dance*, New York: Harper and Row, 1979.

⁹ R. Ruether, "Female symbols, values and context", *ChrCris* 46/19 (1987), p. 461.

¹⁰ Feminist theologians writing from the pagan feminist perspective believe that the Mother Goddess never actually died out. Ruether shows that the Goddess feminists believe their cult survived underground. Something like nine million people, mostly women, are supposed to have died in the witchhunts. Their revival is seen in the form of the Wicca movement which is the Anglo Saxon word for witches. Their nature religion, is not only a feminist religion but it is also an ecological one which operates on the natural rhythms that connect our bodies with the cosmos within which we live. They also have an ethical code which brings humanity into harmony with nature and it is of a personal rather than a social discipline. The feminist Goddess code takes them beyond mere worship of the Goddess and a respect for the ecological environment. They believe that rectification of the social discipline requires constant struggle against the polluting systems of corporate capitalism which proliferates warfare and waste. R. Ruether, *Disputed Questions: On Being a Christian*, p. 135.

persecuted by Christianity, were descendants of the ancient matriarchs both of whom the Goddess feminists represent today.¹¹

What is now to be considered is where exactly does Goddess feminism fit into Ruether's scheme of things? Her sense of ecumenism is obvious in that she appreciates the intrinsic worth of the Goddess feminist viewpoint. In fact there are those of Ruether's critics who believe that she is barely Christian so strong is her tolerance of Goddess feminism. Robert Imbelli, for example, would say that there are times in her work when the name of Jesus Christ "strangely (or symptomatically)...receives scarcely passing mention".¹² The comment, however, is unhelpful and inconclusive since Ruether's writings are much more broad-based than the purely christological. Moreover, Ruether has often contributed greatly to christology and the person of Christ especially since the Second Vatican Council.¹³

Nor is Imbelli Ruether's only critic. Peter Feuerherd describes Ruether as a theologian who is among many Catholic women angry with Church teaching on sexuality and the prohibition of women priests. In this regard he remarks that "Rosemary Radford Ruether, a theologian who has promoted pagan goddess cults, articulates that anger in perhaps its most radical form".¹⁴ Two letters written in "The Tablet" are of the same opinion. The first describes Ruether as being pro-Goddess because of the inclusion in her work of "material from a wide variety of sources, including a picture of the

¹¹ R. Ruether, "The Female Nature of God: A Problem in Contemporary Religious Life", Conc 143/3 (1981), pp. 61-64.

¹² R. Imbelli, "Ruether's Reconstruction", ChrCris 45/7 (1985), p. 160.

¹³ For an extensive bibliography on Ruether's christology see, M.H. Snyder, *The Christology of Rosemary Radford Ruether*, Twenty-Third Publications, 1988.

¹⁴ P. Feuerherd, "A Gorgeous Mosaic", Tablet 246/7903 (1992), p. 104.

Goddess Isis leading Queen Nefertiti (sic) by the hand".¹⁵ The same author also criticises Ruether for claiming that the Bible should be displaced as the "normative source for Christian belief, so that it becomes simply one source among many".¹⁶ The second letter in "The Tablet" attacks Ruether because she believes that goddesses have existed as valid symbols of the divine in human experience and finds that such quests are perfectly acceptable. The author of this letter's objection to Ruether is based on the belief that Ruether's views are dangerous and lead to uncertainty of faith.¹⁷

In her own defence against these criticisms Ruether insists that she is not a Goddess feminist nor does she promote its theology. Her counter argument sets out to distinguish several matters which she believes are being confused by the writers. Firstly, Ruether is concerned that the writers are suspicious of any author who suggests there are female as well as male ways of imaging the divine. Secondly, Ruether argues that there are various ancient and current religions which contain female elements of the divine. These include forms of Buddhism, Hinduism, the Amerindians as well as religions which are no longer extant such as those of ancient Egypt, Greece and Babylonia. Thirdly, Ruether points out that there are female personifications of God in the Jewish and Christian traditions. In this regard Ruether states that these religions are part of the general phenomenology of world religion.¹⁸ Some of these viewpoints will be developed in the next sub-section.

¹⁵ W. Oddie, "Feminist Theologian", Tablet 246/7905 (1992), p. 169.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ V. Riches, untitled letter, Tablet 246/7905 (1992), p. 169.

¹⁸ R. Ruether, "Feminism and the Goddess", Tablet 246/7906 (1992), p. 202.

In principle Ruether sees herself as a *universalist* which means that Christianity is not to be seen as the only true religion while other religions are false and demonic. In other words all world religions, including Christianity have valid insights into the nature of the deity, ethics and spirituality. Alternatively, all of them also promote questionable ideals. Regarding the contemporary Goddess feminist movements Ruether respects their desire to reclaim a new religion that speaks to women's religious needs today. Thus, the problem for all religious beliefs including the Goddess religion is how to differentiate the more valid from the less valid principles contained within. Many criteria may be used such as the historical, the scientific, the ethical and spiritual fruits normally promoted by the respective religions.¹⁹

Ruether's Critique

Once Ruether has stated her case she emphatically denies that she is a promoter of these movements despite her empathy with them. For, as she says, the religious expressions being put forward under the concept of Goddess worship seem to be historically confused and inaccurate. They are also spiritually and psychologically inadequate.²⁰ Above all Ruether's *historical-critical* method previously mentioned is of paramount importance to a better understanding of her rejection of Goddess feminism. Once some of these objections have been outlined it will become more obvious that Ruether would not hold with the theotypical approach in Marian theology. In an attempt to explain why Ruether is not theotypically orientated her difficulties with the Goddess feminist movement are most clear from her critique of the work of Carol Christ a leading Goddess feminist theologian.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Ruether begins her critique by refuting certain assumptions made by Christ as standard presuppositions of the Goddess feminist approach.²¹ The first assumption claims that the movement from polytheism to monotheism equals a movement from the Goddess to an exclusively patriarchal male God. Ruether's disagreement on this point centres around a number of themes. Firstly, she notes that although male monotheistic religions have become predominant those with Goddesses remain constant. These include, for example, Buddhism, Hinduism and native African and American Indians. In addition, never has polytheism at any stage had either a sole or dominant female deity to its credit. Indeed, the gods always have been thought of as one big family complete with male and female members not excluding grandparents, parents and siblings. Ruether also points out that while the image of God in monotheism has been predominantly male it has not been exclusively so. Hebrew writers, she says, have never singled out femaleness *per se* as the object of their attack.²²

Secondly, Christ believes that monotheism promotes class hierarchy while polytheism does not. Ruether responds by explaining that the evidence for this is ambiguous. She insists that polytheism, so far back as we can trace, reflects a class hierarchical world.

²¹ Only three of the five assumptions are being treated in the body of the text above. The five are as follows: Firstly, there is a presupposition that the movement from polytheism to monotheism was a movement from the Goddess to an exclusively patriarchal male God. Secondly, many Goddess feminists believe that female expressions of the divine were deliberately repressed by the patriarchal religions to make women inferior. Thirdly, Goddesses or female deities intrinsically affirm women and express a female-centred religion. Fourthly, there is a pre-supposition that the movement from polytheism to monotheism was a movement from an egalitarian social order to a hierarchical one. Fifthly, and finally there is a belief that an established connection exists between post-Christian neo-paganism and the re-assertion of female-centred, egalitarian values. R. Ruether, "Female symbols, values, and context", *ChrCris* 46/19 (1987), pp. 460-464.

²² Ruether proceeds by claiming that Christianity owes much of its defeat of paganism to female converts. In the first three centuries of Christianity freedmen and artisans at the bottom of the social hierarchy rose to aristocracy by marrying upperclass women who had converted to Christianity. Christianity had gained its female converts by embracing them at a time when paganism had excluded them from its public *cultus*. In addition, this suggests that these women were attracted by Christianity's stance against the public world of family and state. At this early stage Christianity showed an egalitarianism that appealed to many women of the time. If Goddess feminism insists that Christianity is a victory of male-identified over female-identified religion it would have to take account of the major role played by women in the transition from paganism to Christianity *Ibid*, p. 462.

These gods and goddesses were pictured as having slaves who were supposed to do the work of the deities to whom they were far subordinate. This basic imagery of both gods and goddesses reflects a lifestyle of aristocratic leisure in relationship to their serf/slave population. The God of the Bible, by contrast, is a liberator of slaves from the Pharaoh. Moreover, the people of Israel come to know their God specifically through God's liberating powers. Unlike the polytheistic gods of Sumer and Babylon the biblical God does not create human beings so that they may do the Deity's work while the Deity rests. Instead, that God both works and rests in the creation of the universe and all living things. In turn God bids humanity to imitate this rhythm of work. Ruether goes on to say that no matter how monotheism may promote the God-image of male as dominant and female as auxiliary it strongly protests against slavery and class hierarchy. While Ruether would claim that the biblical faiths have mostly failed to promote class equality she would also argue that humanity learned of the great inequalities of wealth and poverty from them. These values, on the other hand, were not learned from Isis, Athena or Ishtar.²³

The third presupposition of Christ's Goddess feminist approach is that there is an established connection between post-Christian neo-paganism and the reassertion of female-centred, egalitarian values. Ruether, on the other hand, believes that in more recent history there is little evidence that modern neo-paganism necessarily promotes peaceful equal values. The neo-paganism of the Renaissance humanists, nineteenth rationalism, and romantic nationalists such as Winston Churchill quickly turned towards fascism, racism and militarism. While this is not the sort of neo-paganism being sought by the Goddess feminists the historical record cannot be forgotten. As Ruether says:

²³ *Ibid.*

Fascist, racist neopaganism cannot just be dismissed by feminists as irrelevant to their quest. We must ask hard questions about the repressed aspects of post-Christian European culture, which uses pre-Christian religion to revitalize these power drives.²⁴

This reflects the difficulty posed by the Judeo/Christian cultural context in which the Goddess feminists live. Judeo/Christianity has succeeded in monopolising public reality for many centuries. These old cultures have survived because of tried and tested experiences. There is a formidable shadow side to their religious and cultural realities. It manifests itself in an *animus* which is commonly identified with those cultural *enemies* that it has conquered in the past. These enemies bear the titles of nature religion, goddess worship, witchcraft, paganism, demonism and so on. Judaism itself, for many years, existed within Christianity as part of Christianity's own suppressed *animus*. It only survived because it was "always able to differentiate between authentic Jewish identity and the Christian anti-jewish animus".²⁵

Goddess feminists, on the other hand, would not be able to sustain such a programme. Firstly, it would be impossible for them to negate the Judeo/Christian culture completely because they have no strong basic tradition within which to work. Secondly, Ruether doubts that there was ever an autonomous women's religion. Even if there were it never survived as an existing independent tradition and it is hardly likely that the Goddess worship of antiquity was such a religion. Thirdly, while the Goddess religion might hold some promise of an alternative religion it has not survived as a living tradition. There is no point in pretending that it has nor is there any point in constructing an imaginary line of descent to promote any kind of feminist religion. It would be simply a religion based on a false understanding of origins. Such

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 463-464.

²⁵ R. Ruether, "Goddesses and Witches: Liberation and Counterculture Feminism", TCC (1980), pp. 846-847.

a religion would only end up succumbing to the suppressed *animus* of the patriarchal religious culture.²⁶

While Ruether believes that there is nothing objectionable about efforts to create a Goddess feminist spirituality she believes that it is more difficult and dangerous than might be realised. It demands a maturity and modesty of greater proportions, than those wounded by patriarchy, might suspect. The best approach to a new spirituality is by means of synthesis and transformation, possibly of the existing traditions, but not separatism and rejection. The only way for a new future is to evaluate female experience in the light of the male dominant culture. In this way it might be possible to bring together a new synthesis by utilising many of the elements of the earlier traditions.²⁷

There is enough evidence here to show that Ruether would have serious difficulties with the Goddess feminist movement ever to use it as a base for Marian Theology. Nor would it be possible for Ruether to develop any kind of theotypological approach from her research. If ever there had been a truly matriarchal society the seeds of a strong theotypology could be gleaned from its female deities but this suggestion is hypothetical. Ruether sees too many disadvantages with Goddess feminism even when it was at its peak in ancient times. As she says, it must be remembered that the Near Eastern Goddess never had any daughters she had only sons. The sons were to be cared for and protected by the Mother Goddess for dominance and war. The focus was always on the sons and the idea of the daughter-queen sitting on the Great Mother's knee is unheard of in any of these traditions.²⁸

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 843. Regarding the imagery in question Ruether notes the increasing centrality of the *Theotokos* of later times. In the official state Christianity of the fifth and sixth centuries it is to the

The Goddess

Ruether's research into the ancient religions unearths a way of life and a symbolism which has direct bearing on the typology. However, the critical-historical analysis that she employs above with respect to Goddess feminism changes radically in relation to her critique of the Great Goddesses of ancient mythology. Her book entitled *Womanguides*²⁹ is a collection of texts intended to provide a resource for the doing of feminist theology. It includes the accumulated heritage of people's experience of the ultimate meaning of life from pre-biblical through biblical times onwards. Perhaps Ruether's change of method is better suited to her aim at this point. While one might be inclined to query this apparent fickleness of approach it can be somewhat substantiated given the experiential presuppositions of the "turn to the subject"³⁰ in theology since the Second Vatican Council. (This was already mentioned in relation to Rahner in the first chapter). Edward Schillebeeckx asserts, for example, that "the world of human experience is the only access to the saving reality of revelation and faith...How could we listen to a revelation from God, how could it be a revelation to man if it falls outside our experience?"³¹

Theotokos that the emperors turn when they hope for a victory in battle. After the victory they return to the *Hagia Sophia* (Church of the Holy Wisdom) to thank the Mother of God for their success. Mary replaces the Roman sun-god of late paganism as the central religious symbol of protection of the empire against its enemies. The centrality of the *Theotokos* in the official cult had a fairly strong effect on the political role of women. Powerful Byzantine empresses abound at this time such as Pulcheria, Theodosia and Irene. Given their power, albeit secondary to the emperors, Ruether believes that it is not far-fetched to suggest that the *Theotokos* returned to life that ancient Egyptian image of the Goddess on the throne upon which the young god-king based his power. The logical outcome was a renewed role for the imperial queen in theocratic politics. From this argument Ruether claims that it cannot be assumed that the victory of Christianity over paganism represented a victory of a more patriarchal over a less patriarchal religion. For, Byzantine Christianity had a more female centred religious symbolism and mandated stronger political roles for women. R. Ruether, "Female symbols, values, and context", *ChrCris* 46/19 (1987), p. 462.

²⁹ R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, Beacon Press, 1985.

³⁰ K. Rahner, *Foundations of a Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, pp. 24-43; 26-31.

³¹ E. Schillebeeckx, "Faith Functioning in Human Self-Understanding", *WHist*, p. 45. For a more elaborate account of Schillebeeckx's understanding of experience see E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Christian Experience in the World*, pp. 30-64. In addition, a concise account of the relation between understanding and human experience is found in D. Lane, *The Experience of God*, Veritas, 1981.

Ruether, then, in her account of the faith experience of pre-biblical and biblical times simply reflects the experiential approach in her theology. Sometimes she makes use of the picture-making technique of the earlier mythologies to state her case and at other times she reiterates the faith relationship that these peoples had with their Deity/deities. The reader of *Womanguides* soon discovers that Hebrew patriarchalism was a relatively late comer to the ancient world which knew of Goddesses. As Ruether says the:

Hebrew Patriarch was not really the Lord of the Cosmos...The people of those agricultural plains and glittering cities that he coveted had an older culture of king and temple. They worshipped other deities who were both Gods and Goddesses. These alien deities must be dethroned and dispossessed so that he and his desert Lord could take control. While dispossessing them, however, he also incorporated much of their culture. The psalms written in the name of the Lord whose name could not be named echoed the patterns of psalms once sung to other deities.³²

The ancient culture of Babylonia invaded by the warrior patriarchal culture had its own Goddess, Ishtar. She was a person of sovereign power, the Queen who shaped the female form of the ruling class. She wore the crown of domination, she reigned and she gave decrees. She was a warrior Lord in much the same way as the Hebrew God was the war Lord of battle. Her people turned to her in need just as the Hebrew people turned to their Lord. She is expected to defeat her enemies and defend her servants and her realm. When they are distressed they cry out to their divine mistress in the hope that she will forgive them for their offences and deliver them from harm. Victorious in battle they will claim their victory and glorify her name as the Mistress of Heaven.³³

³² R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, p. 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Eight hundred years later another great Goddess, Isis of Egypt comes to the fore. Ruether says that she was one of the most powerful deities of the later Greco-Roman world. It was the iconography of Isis and her popular piety that fuelled much of the cult of Mary in Christianity which began to rise in Egypt in the third century c.e. However, a great deal had happened to Isis and the other great Goddesses of the ancient near East in their three thousand year history ruling the empires of Babylonia and Egypt. When these areas were conquered by the Greeks in the fourth century b.c.e. they were transformed into the cult deity of a mystery religion. The mysteries of death and rebirth which had been so much a part of the Goddess phenomenon ceased to belong to the public ceremonies and agricultural cycles. The autonomy of the female deities in these respects was now gone forever. The Goddesses were detached from their earlier political foundations becoming personal religions with rites that assured little more than prosperity, health and immortality.³⁴

The Greeks severed the ancient Goddess from her wholeness by dividing her into separate types. She had always been mother and virgin, warrior and protector. Now she became the virgin warrior, Athena; the virgin huntress, Artemis; the wife who nagged Zeus; Hera, and Aphrodite the Goddess of love. Isis became a gentle nature spirit underlying all natural growth processes. She was transformed into the male stereotypes of femininity. Her beautiful female image and her perfumed scent were the all important descriptions of her. She became the alluring mistress and nurturing, kindly mother. Politics and wars were furthest from her mind. When the time came for Christianity to focus its attentions on Mary in this way they had a ready model in the Hellenised image of Isis. Mary helped the luckless sinner who pleaded for protection and mercy. Just like Isis Mary demanded prayer, fasting and penance and a

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

curbing of the sexual appetites. She also expected a special devotion to her which would be rewarded in heaven.³⁵

Hugo Rahner makes the point that the similarities between the Goddess and Mary are superficial but nonetheless they are historical fact. Neither Judaism nor Christianity was fashioned in a vacuum. Instead, they absorbed the verbal and visual imagery, the rituals, theologies and liturgies of the surrounding cultures of the day. These processes affected the presentation of Mary and the mystery of God even as Christianity was being born.³⁶ Elizabeth Johnson notes that areas where female deities had been honoured with prayer and pilgrimage became associated with Mary. Some of these were places of nature such as wooded grottoes, mountains, springs and lakes. Shrines and temples which had originally been dedicated to the Goddesses were now being re-dedicated to Mary the Mother of God. Examples of these were to be found in Rome, Athens, Chartres and Ephesus. Other examples included imagery such as Mary's dark blue cloak, the turreted crown and the link with the moon and the stars. There is also the iconography of Mary who is seated on a throne presenting her Child to the world in the same pose of the Egyptian Goddess Isis with her son Horus.³⁷

John Macquarrie is sufficiently concerned to say that:

there can be no question of a return to polytheistic religion or any kind of paganism, in which one or more goddesses are set alongside him whom the Bible recognizes as the one true God...Some of the more extreme feminist sects have chosen to revive the figure of the goddess,

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mysteries*, p. 13.

³⁷ E. Johnson, "Mary and the Female Face of God", *TS* 50 (1989), p. 506.

but those who want to remain within the Christian tradition must look for another way.³⁸

Macquarrie's concern is that Mary's place in Christianity should be secured on a Christian theological basis and not on any appeal to pre-Christian practices. He believes that it is necessary to strike a balance between two quite powerful prejudices that stand in the way of a proper understanding and devotion to Mary. On one side there are the theologians who suspect that giving Mary a more prominent place in theology might lead us back to the paganism in question. On the other side there are the extreme feminist groups who worship the Goddess explicitly in non-Christian forms. Neither of these, according to Macquarrie, is to be given exaggerated importance.³⁹ What is clear and acceptable for a Marian theology of today, however, was not so clear at the time of the flowering of Mary. Even the cursory outline given above shows that without the pagan *Magna Mater* there could have been no imaginative impetus for Marian theology. The Marian tradition did not appear out of a vacuum. On the contrary, it would be possible for the Christian feminist to research into the Goddess religions and draw the conclusion that Mary should be given a co-equal place with God in the order of things.

The Goddess Eclipsed

It would not be possible, however, to make the same claim for the Goddess in reference to the Hebrew scriptures. Here in this great work of patriarchal interpretation the image of the Mother Goddess of ancient times is eclipsed. Her subversion meant that she took different but subordinate forms to that of her pagan ancestors. According to Ruether, Old Testament religion usually reflects an unyielding war against nature religion, as represented by the cult of Baal and Anath.

³⁸ J. Macquarrie, *Mary for all Christians*, p. 23.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

While the Yahwists were attempting to drive out the nature religions popular piety in their own religion began to envisage Yahweh as the consort to the Great Mother. Ashtaroth was worshipped for more than half the duration of the Solomonic Temple. In addition, a temple cultus, psalms, kingship and annual festivals were all adapted from the Caananites to meet the needs of Yahwism.⁴⁰ Raphael Patai has also shown that Ashtaroth survives in a variety of ways in Old Testament thought. She resurfaces as a symbol of Mother Israel and the feminine aspect of God in the kabbalistic and talmudic traditions.⁴¹

When the Goddess emerges, according to Ruether, she is chastened and transformed. The Great Mother becomes an allegory in the form of the people of Israel or the Spouse of Yahweh. The Father God takes this people to be his bride (also his daughter) but even here the appearance of the daughter-bride is not greatly evident.⁴² Furthermore, when this motif is developed it is detrimental to the feminine elements within the tradition. The prophet Hosea, for example, develops such a motif but in doing so he uses the image negatively:

Say to your brother, "My people," and to your sister, "She has obtained pity." "Plead with your mother, plead-for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband that she put away her harlotry from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts; lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and set her like a parched land, and slay her with thirst. Upon her children also I will have no pity, because they are children of harlotry. For their mother has played the harlot; she that conceived them has acted shamefully. (Hos 2:1-5)

Ruether's interpretation of the above passage shows that Israel, imaged as female, is seen as the wayward spouse who plays the harlot with Baal. Her attraction to Baal is

⁴⁰ R. Ruether, *New Woman New Earth*, pp. 40-41.

⁴¹ R. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp. 45-50.

⁴² R. Ruether, *New Woman New Earth*, p. 41.

greater than her attraction to Yahweh whose commandments as her new Lord are too stern. The portrayal of the faithless spouse theme between Yahweh and his daughter/bride in marital terms changes that which is sacred in Canaanite marriage into a lessser Hebrew patriarchal construct. Again, one of the chief reasons for the use of such judgemental terms against the female image is the uncompromising war against the Canaanite nature religion. In making this point Ruether is showing that while the struggle is yet too strong and too immediate the feminine image is the one that is weak and in need of correction. One redeeming feature of Hebrew imagery in the feminine is that the Rabbis enshrined the Song of Songs, in adapted form, into the Sacred marriage. The bride and her lover in the hymn are none other than Israel and God.⁴³

Ruether goes on to say that later Judaism portrays a second dimension of feminine symbolism in its Wisdom literature. A female personification of God is seen in the figure of Wisdom itself. Wisdom is like a second *person* of God, a female divine *daughter*. The Jewish literary scholars take their ideas again from the pagan Goddess, this time from the Babylonian Goddess Ishtar, who brought divine wisdom to mortals. The Egyptian Goddess, Isis, the embodiment of wisdom in her own culture, was also influential at this time.⁴⁴ Wisdom, personified in chapter eight of Proverbs, is described as the beloved daughter who assisted God with creation. She is also seen as the agent through whom God continues to govern the world. Moreover, Wisdom is God's agent in providence, revelation and redemption. Her roles are similar to that of the *Logos* or divine Word in Christianity. However, she does not possess any special human embodiment. In later Jewish thought, during the period of formation of the New Testament, the emphasis on Wisdom seems to have been dropped. This is

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁴ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, pp. 25-27.

probably due to Wisdom's image being taken up by the heretical Gnostic movement which saw Wisdom as a kind of cosmic Goddess. Through her an evil world was begotten but also the means by which fallen souls could be redeemed.⁴⁵

Wisdom also reappears in the image of the divine *Shekinah* (Ex 40:34-38, Num 9:15-23) which corresponds to the Presence of God on earth. Like its counterpart the word *Sophia* (Wisdom) in Greek, *Shekinah* (Presence) is of feminine gender.⁴⁶ These images portray Rabbinic thought as sometimes positive towards the female image and its relationship to God as Israelite bride. With respect to the daughter-bride relationship Ruether shows that she was also regarded as the loved one of God:

As such she can be talked about as God's beloved daughter and also his bride. She is also the collective embodiment of the people in their relationship to God. Here Israel "herself" is also thought of as God's beloved wife. Israel as a collective being can also be seen as a mother who guides and nurtures people, the children of Israel, bringing them back into friendship with God, their Father.⁴⁷

After the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jewish people among the Gentiles God became separated from the people of Israel. The exile expresses this separation. However, the *Shekinah* remains with Israel. Throughout their sorrowings and wanderings she travels with them after the estrangement from their Father. The exile itself is seen as a kind of estrangement or separation of God from the God-self. The final union between God and people will come only with the redemption of the world. Again a similar idea is found in the New Testament understanding of the Church at the end of time when it will come down from heaven as a bride and be united with her husband, the Messiah (Rev 21:2).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

What then can be said of the pagan concept of the Goddess and its manifestation in the Hebrew scriptures? Firstly, Ruether has claimed that although the Goddess appeared as the divine bride/spouse/daughter of God the Goddess as an entity in her own right was certainly repressed. Ruether's interpretation draws certain parallels between the Goddess as suppressed in the Hebrew scriptures and the surfacing of Marian themes and symbols in Christianity. Reminiscences of Mary include the titles of Wisdom, bride, spouse, daughter and presence some of which were referred to in the previous chapter of this thesis. While it would not be accurate to give an exaggerated claim to the pagan and Hebrew influences on Marian themes and symbolism there is little doubt that they were significant. Nonetheless, both the pagan and Judaic tradition's female imagery was gathered into Marian theology to a greater rather than to a lesser extent.

Ostensibly, the feminine symbols appear as expressions of three types of theological relationships. The first female symbol is an ecclesiological one. Here Israel or the Church is represented as God's bride or the bride of Christ and mother of the faithful. The second symbol in Jewish and Christian theology is sophiological. This includes the use of feminine gender words such as *ruah* (spirit), *shekinah* (presence) and *sophia* (wisdom) which has been mentioned already. The third function of feminine symbols in Christianity is the representation of the soul or *psyche* in relation to God. When the soul is seen in relation to God it is expressed as passive, receptive and open to the Word of God. The soul then becomes the bridal soul who awaits the coming of Christ the bridegroom. Ruether argues that these cannot be ignored as important factors in the formation of Marian theology. Mary the Mother of Jesus was the figure around whom many feminine images in the above traditions were to gather.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ R. Ruether, *New Woman New Earth*, pp. 42-46.

10. Ruether and Theatypology

Attention must now be paid to Ruether's interpretation of Marian theology to find out whether or not it contains a theatypical undercurrent. On the one hand, it is obvious from her criticism of the Goddess feminist movement that she would not in any way wish to associate herself with a Goddess/Mary theology. On the other hand, given her outline of the Great Goddess and its influences on the Hebrew scriptures one might presume to find theatypical strains within her work. This section will show that certain aspects of Ruether's Marian theology, based on her descriptive rather than on her historical analytical method, betrays a certain theatypical content. However, as the thesis progresses it will be shown that she is not unlike other theologians in not distinguishing between what is theatypical and what is not. It should also be taken into account that Ruether is not a Marian theologian, therefore, she has not worked out any complete Marian theology. Instead, she looks carefully at the real and effective religious symbols by which people live and how they actually function in culture and society.⁵⁰ Keeping this in mind it will be easier to see that Ruether's sometimes use of theatypology is only secondary to her main aim. Her theatypical symbols, then, are part of the means by which she creates a new textual base and a new canon for those who have rejected patriarchy.

Another point to be noted is that Ruether is eclectic rather than progressive in her Marian work especially where it is outlined in relation to Goddess symbolism. Although this thesis would not hold with such an approach it will be shown below how Ruether's unconscious employment of theatypology is useful to her purposes in the feminist debate. This is particularly evident in her book *Womanguides* ⁵¹ referred

⁵⁰ R. Ruether, "Female Symbols, values and context", *ChrCris* 46/19 (1987), p. 460.

⁵¹ See especially, R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, Beacon Press, 1985.

to above. Excerpts taken from here relating to her feminist midrash on the gospels and subsequent commentaries will further show that Ruether makes use of the Goddess inheritance for Mary when the need arises. Paradoxically, Ruether's anti-theatypical direction becomes apparent when she moves away from the pre-historical period in question. Some of her other works and ideas, which will be referenced in a later section below, and in the final chapter of this thesis, will show that Ruether is much less likely to be a proponent of theatypology.

The Goddess and Mary

Ruether's lack of attention to method may be one reason for the theatypical elements contained in her Marian writings. The post-Christian feminist Daphne Hampson remarks that some of Ruether's work is "muddled methodologically".⁵² Perhaps this is because Ruether's Goddess and relational Marian work is a comprehensive and inclusive production of prose, pictures and critiques of the cultural and symbolic life-forms of the Hebrews, Greeks and New Testament peoples of the ancient Near East. Ruether's approach in this regard is "to make women's experience visible"⁵³ and not to write a Marian theology. The illustrations and texts contained in *Womanguides* are intended to portray the greatness of feminine divine and quasi-divine entities. Ashera the Canaanite Goddess is vibrant with the powers of life, Isis of Egypt leads Queen Nefertari by the hand to claim their buried past, a psalm is addressed to the Great Goddess of Babylonia, the Holy Spirit is conceived as Mother in Syriac Christianity and Christ is imaged as mother in medieval thought.

⁵² Hampson is not specifically referring to Ruether's Marian writings here but it is being suggested in this thesis that the same principle would sometimes apply to certain aspects of her Marian approach. D. Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, p. 28.

⁵³ R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, p. X.

Hampson reacts by saying that "(it) is of interest...that Ruether, as she has increasingly wanted to find models for women in the past has been forced to look outside the ancient Hebrew and Christian tradition".⁵⁴ Hampson is sceptical about an appeal to mythologies which the majority of women today would know so little about. She believes that few would be interested in associating themselves with female divinities and quasi-divinities of past cultures who belonged to wholly different societies. For these reasons Hampson seriously doubts that either the European or American cultures could ever accept the images in question as vehicles to reach God.⁵⁵ While one might appreciate Ruether's intention Hampson's criticism is not without foundation. There can be no doubt that in *Womanguides* Ruether's search for female images of the divine accounts for a devotional similarity between Isis and Mary. Here she betrays a certain disquiet with the Reformation tradition for banishing Mary as the "dim survival of the ancient Goddess...which allowed only the patriarchal Father God and his Son into its theology".⁵⁶

Suffice it to say that Ruether's Mary is intended as something of a saving image for women. This image of Mary is subtly reflected in the ancient Mother Goddess, the matrix from which everything in existence emerges. Isis, Ashera and Apsu are but few of the names she chooses to imply continuity of the Marian figure in favour of the liberation of women. Ruether, however, is more direct in her classic work *Sexism and God-Talk* ⁵⁷ when it comes to relating ancient Goddess symbolism to Mary. In a second edition of this book she has not revised her position as outlined in the prologue to the first chapter. Here she offers a feminist midrash on the Gospel in three acts. An

⁵⁴ D. Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, p. 35.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵⁶ R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, SCM Press, 1983 and 1992 respectively.

illustration of the midrash will show how Ruether uses mytho-poetical language to advance her cause. In this instance the Mother Goddess and Mary become interchangeable.

The Midrash

In the midrash God the Father is seated in His throne surrounded by his Cherubim pondering the chaos of the world down below. He is unhappy with the daughters of the earth who have used their wiles and seductive ways to bring trouble to humanity. The first one, Eve, was particularly to blame for destroying the original plan. From that time onwards women must suffer at the hands of men whom they must obey in all things.⁵⁸ Ruether's introduction of her midrash in this way is reminiscent of the Father God of the Hebrew scriptures. Her intention is obvious. Using the midrash she hopes to make her readers consider critically the difficulties which have arisen from this patriarchal image which has been handed down through the centuries almost always without question.

What is not so obvious in Ruether's midrash is the part which follows. While God the Father is worrying about the state of fallen humanity another image crosses before His mind. She is a shining figure clothed in a dark mantle which is embroidered with stars. The moon crowns her head and she holds fruits and flowers in her hands. God the Father is perplexed by this image of the 'Queen of Heaven' whom He cannot erase from his memory although He has crushed her rule a millenium ago. The doubts abound in His own mind that *She* may still reign outside His omniscience and the sharp eyes of his couriers who survey all parts of His Kingdom. He, as God the Father, could not possibly countenance any of His subjects worshipping or even

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1. (1992).

imagining any other idea of God but He.⁵⁹ It is at this juncture that the Goddess in Ruether's midrash becomes synonymous with traditional images of Mary the *Mother of God*. An image of the Queen of Heaven appears smiling and making the following pronouncement:

No, Sabaoth, my Son. I am the Mother of gods and humans, Creatrix of all things. I am your Mother, too. Even when you deny me, I am still here. Beyond your knowledge and your decrees, there is another who is before You, who is greater than You, and who will survive the death of Your Reign in the heavens.⁶⁰

Here is a vision of Mary reminiscent of the *Theotokos* as she was theotypically portrayed in the Middle Ages. The *Theotokos* of Ruether's midrash is not some Goddess from the ancient Near East but it is Mary of Nazareth in Goddess form. Ruether does not explicitly state this claim. However, her pictorial imagery is so vivid that the underlying meaning of her symbolic analogy does not allow for misinterpretation. The story goes on to show that Sabaoth startled by the words of the Goddess experiences a sharp pain of anxiety. He is then forced to ask Himself if the worship of God the Father is not the greatest idolatry of them all? He fears that He has begun to resemble the kings of the earth too closely. Perhaps this hierarchy of heaven and earth is a facade and a delusion concealing all other realities? Then comes the remarkable admission from Sabaoth, God the Father when he says that "(in) former times I have known other ways of being God".⁶¹ This reflection leads Him to empty Himself out in order to enter into the womb of Mary.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*

As well as the theatypical inferences in the midrash Ruether's use of hierarchical imagery is somewhat confusing. Specific reference is being made here not so much to the Goddess image itself but to Mary as Goddess Queen of heaven. Ruether is normally so critical of the hierarchical structure both in society and in Catholic Christianity that one would not expect her to appeal to it on any account. She is against hierarchy in all its forms because of its close association with patriarchy which she expresses in the following way:

By patriarchy we mean not only the subordination of females to males, but the whole structure of Father-ruled society: aristocracy over serfs, masters over slaves, kings over subjects, racial overlords over colonized people. Religions that reinforce hierarchical stratification use the Divine as the apex of this system of privilege and control. The religion of the ancient Near East link the Gods and Goddesses with the kings and queens, the priests and priestesses, the warrior and temple aristocracy of a stratified society. The Gods and Goddesses mirror this ruling class and form its heavenly counterpart. The divinities show mercy and favor to the distressed, but in the manner of noblesse oblige.⁶³

However, it is only fair to point out again at this stage that Ruether is trying to reclaim a social and theological equilibrium for women. In doing so she uses everything at her disposal for her purposes. As she says herself:

Feminist theology involves, not simply an exegesis of past texts but a retelling of the story of redemption from women's experience. It entails a feminist spirituality that must precede a feminist theology or exegesis. Women need to be able to experience the divine in their own image and to create the dance, the poetry, the music, and the story that express this experience.⁶⁴

In the same vein writing in defence of Ruether Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi explains that Ruether's desire for a historical matrix causes her to deconstruct the patriarchal God that contemporary women find so offensive. In this way Ruether:

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁶⁴ R. Ruether, "The Development of My Theology", *RelStudR* 15/1 (1989), p. 4.

risers far above the level of traditional scholarship to function as visionary and 'Prophet'. In so doing, she replaces the alienating traditional symbol of ultimacy with one more appropriate to the spiritual needs of women.⁶⁵

Despite these justifications Ruether's reversal of the heavenly order in the midrash is, nonetheless, disconcerting. If an ecclesiastical approach is to be founded upon Ruether's work these theotypical aspects must be eliminated. It is more important to understand, however, that the theotypical undercurrent in her work is not pervasive overall. As a general rule her Marian theology tends to follow an anti-theotypical direction much of which helps to lay the desired ecclesiastical base. Strong hints of this claim are to be found in her non-midrash orientated texts. In order to make the point some brief references will now be made to this effect.

The Lady and Mary

For example, Ruether does not accept the portrayal of the Virgin Mary as the antetype of spiritual femininity because it implies a debasement of the female. Anything that does reflects a theotypical tendency. Ruether rejects the spiritual-femininity concept because it is used to proclaim the superior spiritual nature of women. Evidence of such practice is found from about the time of the French Revolution onwards. From that time the spiritual femininity of Mary became secularised and generalised to idealise women. This nineteenth-century image of women romanticised them as being more delicate, moral and spiritual in nature than men but less sexual. That image of the nature of women and men was compounded of a fusion of a bourgeois Protestant idealisation of marriage/home/life and Mariology.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ K. Allen Rabuzzi, "The Socialist Feminist Vision of Rosemary Radford Ruether: A Challenge to Liberal Feminism", *RelStudR* 15/1 (1989), p. 7.

⁶⁶ R. Ruether, *New Woman New Earth*, p. 19.

Within Protestantism Mariology disappeared and no longer became a matter for theological speculation.⁶⁷ What Ruether finds unacceptable about this is that Protestantism did not create any new role for women. The idealised Mary and her counter image in the bourgeois Lady of the time all but disappeared. There was nothing comparable in the Protestant tradition to match the religious orders of Catholicism and public ministry was closed to women. St. Paul's order that women should keep their heads covered and remain silent became the norm. The result was that woman was relegated to the traditional status of the patriarchal way of life. Here, living under the rule of her husband, woman existed primarily for childbearing. As Ruether describes it the Puritan divines tirelessly "trotted out the Adam's-rib story to define female virtues as those of silence, submissiveness, and service".⁶⁸

It is clear that all the hallmarks of the virginal feminism of the Early Fathers began to re-emerge, yet again, in the nineteenth century. With the Puritan romanticisation of marriage Catholicism became influenced by the ideals of the bourgeois family. The denigration of marriage by the Early Fathers was balanced in the Romantic period by application of the image of spiritual femininity not only to the virginal life but also to the idea of chaste matrimony and the encouragement of the cult of the Holy Family. Nonetheless, the idealised view of women both inside and outside of family life co-existed with the contrary view of woman as the carnal type. Even the emergence of intellectual and independent women at the time of the Enlightenment resulted in a plethora of paranoid myths about the viciousness of women's nature. A great deal of misogynist literature poured forth between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries which Ruether regards as a continuous repression of the early stirrings of the feminist movement. Frantically, European thinkers tried to maintain the social order which

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

was being seriously threatened. Ruether, therefore, suggests that the "popularization of the mariological tradition of spiritual femininity was an integral part of this reaction".⁶⁹

The Lady-Mary image reflected in the above outline forms a backdrop to understanding why Ruether would play down such theatypical ideals as the Immaculate Conception and the virgin birth. In the Victorian era the idea of pure womanhood still lived on. The pure woman was not tainted by sexual feeling while her husband secretly visited the houses of prostitution which abounded at the time. The frail bourgeois lily-white lady would not be expected to have sexual intercourse with her husband, except for the purposes of procreation. Yet, while Victorian women were kept ignorant of the biological functionings of their own bodies because marriage was fused with romantic love working class women worked like slaves in the sweatshops of Europe. It was little better in the American South where sexism and racism sexually exploited the black woman and greatly honoured the white woman of the Middle Classes. The mariological tradition of the time knew nothing of the life of the lower classes. It simply told of the anti-sexual purity which created a "model of the ideal wife and mother who is a fruitful mother yet a lifelong sexual innocent".⁷⁰

Given Ruether's dissatisfaction with the Lady-Mary view of women what is now to be said overall of Ruether and theatypology? Firstly, it can be argued that Ruether would not wish to see Mary portrayed as Goddess given her stance on Goddess Feminism itself. Secondly, although Ruether uses the Goddess approach in her midrash and associates this with Mary she does not have an overall theatypical approach. If there is to be any real criticism of Ruether in this respect it is to be found in her *modus*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

operandi. Here she changes her method to suit her aim. Her real concern is to regain co-equal status for women which she did by using a feminist midrash. The end, however, (that is, the regaining of women's experience) does not justify the means (that is, the Goddess-Mary imagery midrash). Clearly Ruether's story-telling leaves room for confusion in relation to certain aspects of her use of Marian symbolism. Therefore, the greatest criticism of Ruether amounts to the fact that she has simply used different approaches to Mary. Unlike Boff, on the other hand, she has never worked out a theotypical Marian theology. Furthermore, she has quite clearly stated that Mary "is not a feminine divine hypostasis".⁷¹

Ruether has obviously come across the same difficulty as every other theologian who writes about Mary. That is, how to deal with a set of Marian androcentric symbols which have been handed down through the centuries. Mary Grey puts it well when she says that:

when faced with the marian tradition, the danger of drowning in themes, motifs, uncovering layer after layer of doctrinal/devotional/sociological and cultural connections, psychological undercurrents, ecumenical battlefields, stereotypical role-models, the novelist's flight of fantasy, the feminist wishful thinking, is very real. Is there such a thing as Mariological truth?⁷²

Given Grey's comment one can empathise with Ruether's different methods and perspectives on Mary in relation to feminist theology. Grey goes on to say that contemporary women are still confronted with this legacy left by patriarchy. She believes that Mary has been used in Christian spirituality as icon, ideal and role-model for *all* women. If Marian theology is to be reclaimed for women it must be based on the perspective of right relationship that is drawn from between two poles.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁷² M. Grey, "Reclaiming Mary: A Task for Feminist Theology", *TWay* 29 (1989), p. 334.

The first concerns the integrity and self-affirmation of the person. The second concerns the person's interdependence and intersubjectivity.⁷³ This same idea is to be found in Ruether particularly in her understanding of Mary in relation to women. For, Ruether has said "(whatever) diminishes the full personhood of women is rejected as not redemptive".⁷⁴

The accumulation of symbols and images inherited from both paganism and Judaism has, therefore, claimed two casualties. These are Mary in the first instance and women in the second instance. The theotypical approach and its reflection in the suppression of the Goddess in Judaism does not make for the right relationship to which Gray refers. Rather, it culminates in the diminishment of the "full personhood of women" as Ruether fears. One of Ruether's greatest difficulties is that in spite of the image of the female power being conveyed in terms of Wisdom the stance taken by the author is androcentric. Few would disagree that Wisdom serves the purpose of the patriarchal God of Judaism. She is seen as little other than a mediator between humanity and the male God. The unfortunate result is that the femininity of Wisdom is auxiliary and relative to the image of the male personhood of God. This in its turn takes away from the focus of the female personhood of God. For this reason the figure of Wisdom does not supply an opportunity for women to find a proper feminine identification with her either as an agency or the centre of action.⁷⁵ Ruether also makes the point that the

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁷⁴ Cited in M. Grey, "Reclaiming Mary: A Task for Feminist Theology", *TWay* 29 (1989), p. 337.

⁷⁵ R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, pp. 22-24.

accounts of the image of God in the Judaic tradition⁷⁶ make way for a progressive trend which not only subordinates but finally eliminates the female deities.⁷⁷

This appropriation of ultimate divine sovereignty as a male symbol allowed the female symbol to appear only as receptive.⁷⁸ With Mary's inheritance from the Pagan culture as a divinity and from the Hebrew culture as a receptive or mediating principle an ambiguity is born. The problem is later compounded in Christianity with the appearance on the horizon of the christatypical approach. It could be said, on the one hand, that it is something of a middle ground between the theatypical and ecclesiastypical approaches. On the other hand, it does not imply a balance of any kind. The christatypical approach, which semi-divinises Mary, puts her almost on a par with Christ while at the same time paradoxically subordinating her to him.⁷⁹ As with the theatypical approach Ruether does not make reference to this term but she has an understanding of it in her work. This will be dealt with in the second section to part four of this thesis which follows below. Immediately below, however, it will be necessary to outline some of the problems with the christatypical approach and how it developed in the tradition. It should be recalled here that the christatypical approach offered something of a foundation for the theatypical approach of the later Middle Ages. The former approach began with the Early Fathers.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37. Ruether applies this same idea not only to Judaism but to the creation stories of the ancient Near East and Greek worlds. These stories would include Hesiod's *Theogony* and Plato's *Timaeus* as well as the Hebrew Creation stories.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁷⁸ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, p. 139.

⁷⁹ This idea is not to be understood by the traditional term "hyperdulia". Latria is the worship of God, "dulia" is the honour paid to the Apostles and saints and Mary's devotion comes somewhere in between the two otherwise known as "hyperdulia". However, the christatypical approach is much more complex since "hyperdulia" refers only to a devotional attitude while the christatypical is a particular type of model for Marian theology.

____Part Four____

11. The Christatypical Approach

James Mackey claims that while the Church has always loudly denied the divinity of Mary in its doctrines it nonetheless has flirted with the idea.⁸⁰ The truth of this statement is to be seen in the Church's christatypical approach to Marian theology. This part of the thesis will base its argument on Mackey's point that while there has always been some innate desire on the part of the tradition to divinise Mary official theological argumentation has, paradoxically, recoiled from such a position. A reminder of the christatypical model as pointed out in the first chapter might be of help here. Theologically speaking, the christatypical approach suggests that while Mary is on a par with Christ in certain matters she is at one and the same time subordinate to him. In this respect Mary is imaged not only as a semi-divinity but also as a super-eminent example of perfect humanity. An explanation of what this means will be outlined in certain christatypical themes and titles attributed to Mary within the context of the tradition. Some account, therefore, will be taken of the co-Redeemer and mediatrix titles ending with a selection of references to apparitions, devotions and Mary's assumption.

At the outset it is probably best to keep in mind that Mary was never meant to be the focus of any doctrines which surrounded her. However, since she was the mother of Christ she became inextricably associated with the doctrines concerning the humanity and divinity of Jesus. The very nature of that relationship between Mary and Jesus necessitated a Christ-centered Mariology which later, it could be argued, became christatypology. The seeds of the christatypical approach began with the Early Fathers, some of whom will be named below, but at this time a theology of Mary had

⁸⁰ J. Mackey, "The Use and Abuse of Mary in Roman Catholicism", WNF, p. 106.

not been properly developed. In the early stages of the tradition Mary was not seen as the spotless and sinless virgin who could do no wrong. Belief in Mary's perfection only came about slowly. It was not until the Council of Ephesus, already alluded to in the second chapter, that the Marian tradition began to gather momentum. Up until this time and for a long time afterwards statements about Mary were always primarily statements about Christ.

The christatypical approach, therefore, is Christ-centred not Mary-centred. Perhaps this is why the Church has constantly been able to flirt with the divinity of Mary as Mackey suggests. It has played around with images of Mary always on the pretext that its Christ-centredness excuses everything that might be said about Mary within a christological context. A Christ-centred approach in relation to Mary keeps her in the wings. She is always ready to be called upon when required and like a person who is being flirted with she may be seen in either a good or a bad light. The doctrines that built up around Mary in the Early Fathers show that in the very early stages, at least, she was not always seen as perfect. What is also obvious is the Father's insistence on Mary's subordination to Christ. Even at this stage, however, it should be noted that Mary was always considered to be very much above the rest of humanity and the contrast between Eve and women (discussed in the second chapter) came to the fore relegating Eve and women to a position inferior to that of men.

The Early Fathers

In the early Fathers the ambiguity of Mary's role began around the time of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (177-178 c.e.). He was one of the first great theologians of Christendom. As with many theologians of his time his doctrines were developed in opposition to heresy, especially Gnosticism. Irenaeus represents both the traditions of the East and the West and for this reason his Marian doctrine is particularly important.

One of the most significant points about Irenaeus' doctrine is the contrast, at this early stage, that he draws between Eve and Mary:

Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying: Behold the handmaid of the Lord...Eve, however, disobedient: for she did not obey, even though she was still a virgin. Inasmuch as she, having indeed Adam for a husband, yet being still a virgin, became disobedient and was made both for herself and the whole human race the cause of death, so also Mary, having a husband destined for her yet being a virgin, by obeying, became the cause of salvation both for herself and the whole human race...Thus also was the knot of Eve's disobedience dissolved by Mary's obedience; for what the virgin Eve had tied up by unbelief, this the Virgin Mary loosened by faith.⁸¹

Typical of the Early Fathers this is not just a simple contrast between Eve and Mary. While Eve had been responsible for placing the human race in bondage Mary was responsible for releasing it. Mary, then became the advocate or comforter and so the rescuer of the whole human race. Already at this stage Mary becomes the great intercessor of humanity through her obedience. Mary's obedience is tied up with her divine motherhood for it was in this respect that she was obedient to the will of God. The fact that Mary is intercessor and Mother of God ties her in closely with the mystery of redemption.⁸²

This goodness of Mary in the Early Fathers corresponds with the idea of her human frailty. At this early stage in the building up of the more fully fledged christatypical approach Mary is not seen to be the perfect creature. Some human imperfection is obvious in Irenaeus' teaching on Mary in relation to the marriage feast of Cana (Jn 2:4-5). Jesus' rather abrupt reply to Mary is interpreted by Irenaeus in the following way "(when) Mary hurries to the admirable sign of the wine and before the time

⁸¹ Cited in H. Graef, *A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 1, p. 39.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40.

desires to participate of the mixed cup...the Lord *repels* her untimely haste..."⁸³ (My italics). It is understandable that a theology as symbolic as that of John's Gospel has as yet not been fully developed by the Fathers. However, it is also clear that Irenaeus was ready to admit of Mary's ability to human error. Just to make the contrast a modern writer Michael O'Carroll, insists on a benign understanding of Irenaeus' interpretation. Of the part that reads "(my) hour has not yet come" O'Carroll says that it is not a discussion on Mary's holiness at all. It is, rather, a statement of the complete foreknowledge of the Father and the accomplishment of all things by the Son at the proper time.⁸⁴

Following Irenaeus Tertullian (160-220 c.e.) draws a parallel between Eve and Mary which again is unfavourable to Eve. He says that:

What the one had done wrong by believing, the other made good by believing...Eve...finally brought forth the diabolic murderer of his brother. Mary, on the contrary, brought forth him, who was to redeem Israel, his brother according to the flesh, who had killed him.⁸⁵

Tertullian's very strong contrast between the two women shows to what extent he was prepared to elevate Mary in his theology. However, despite this approach Johannes Quasten makes the point that Tertullian was much more concerned with the heresies at the time than he was concerned with Mary. These included the Marcionites, Basilides and Valentinus all of whom espoused some form of Gnosticism or other. They had denied the reality of Christ's flesh and revived the Docetic errors.⁸⁶ Evidence of Tertullian's lesser concern with Mary is based on his interpretation of

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁸⁴ M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 190.

⁸⁵ Cited in H. Graef, *A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 1, p. 41.

⁸⁶ J. Quasten, *Patrology*, pp. 282-283.

those parts of the scriptures where Jesus sends his mother and brothers away (Mt 12:46 ff) and in his dialogue with the woman in the crowd who calls out "(blessed) is the womb that bore you" (Lk 11:27). Tertullian claims of these passages that Mary was not among her Son's followers. In this respect he even goes so far as to compare her with the unbelieving Synagogue saying that Christ rejected her and "transferred the blessedness from the womb and breasts of his mother to his disciples".⁸⁷ Like Irenaeus Tertullian's writings show that along with his idealisation of Mary there is also a strong understanding of her imperfection.

Another Church Father who precedes the full blown christatypical approach is Origen (185-254 c.e.). Like the other Fathers' he boasted of Mary's personal perfection on the one hand and told of her imperfection on the other. Mary's personal perfection was exalted because of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the divine child-bearing.⁸⁸ Origen interprets Mary's utterance to the angel on the announcement of her conception as incredulity. ("How can this be, since I am a virgin? Lk 1:34).⁸⁹ However, the most telling passage in Origen on Mary's imperfection centres around the sword of Simeon. Origen saw this sorrow of Mary as the doubt which would pierce Mary's soul in the Passion. He writes:

What! Are we to suppose that, when the apostles were scandalized the Lord's Mother was exempt from scandal? If she did not suffer scandal in the Lord's Passion, Jesus did not die for her sins...even thee shall the sword of unbelief pierce, and thou shalt be struck with the spear of doubt and thy thoughts shall tear thee asunder, when thou shalt see him whom thou hadst heard to be the son of God, and knew to have been begotten by no seed of man, crucified and dying, and subject to human torments, and at last with tears complaining and saying, 'Father if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me'.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Cited in H. Graef, *A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 1, pp. 43-44.

⁸⁸ M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 274.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

It is clear that Origen believed Mary to have been embarrassed by scandal. Furthermore, she must have done wrong as Jesus had to die for his mother's sins in the same way that he had to die for everyone else's. Yet, it is around this period that Mary becomes more difficult for ordinary people to emulate. The seeds of her spiritual motherhood, her mysticism and her impossible perpetual virginal status as a mother now become more apparent.

Less than one hundred years after Origen the christatypical approach is coming to its full expression. The ideal portrayal of Mary as completely virtuous, virgin mother of Christ comes with Ambrose (339-397 c.e.). She is the New Eve who has defeated the power of the devil. She is the woman of strength who is all alone when the power of the Most High overshadows her. Only the most special things happened to people when they were alone, according to Ambrose. The following sentence shows that the christatypical approach is now coming into its own. "She was alone and she worked the salvation of the world and conceived the redemption of all men".⁹¹ Pride of place goes to Mary's virginity when he makes the link between her virginity and salvation:

A virgin begot the salvation of the world, a virgin brought forth the life of all. Should virginity, then, be abandoned which was of benefit to all in Christ? A virgin carried him whom this world cannot contain or support. And when He was born of Mary's womb, He yet preserved the enclosure of her modesty, and the inviolate seal of her virginity. Thus Christ found in the virgin that which He wanted to be His own, that which the Lord of all might take for Himself.⁹²

Not only is the christatypical approach seen in the indissoluble association between Mary's virginity and Christ's salvation but Ambrose also tells of her other almost super human qualities which manifest themselves at the foot of the cross. While she

⁹¹ Ambrose, "Letters to Bishops", Fathers 26, pp. 134-135.

⁹² Ambrose, "Letters to Priests", Fathers 26, pp. 332-333.

stood at the foot of the cross she did not weep but held her ground as the men fled. Mary remained fearless of the slayers who had taken her Son offering herself to the persecutors. Ambrose adds to this her spiritual purity which he mentions sixteen times in his writings. Then without denying her genuine humanity he speaks of Mary as not from this earth but from heaven.⁹³ Ambrose's reference to Mary's genuine humanity while claiming that she is a creature from heaven is a subtle but unconscious portrayal of the dual nature of Jesus. However, even to imply divinity in Mary in the Early Fathers, including Ambrose would be anathema.

Here lies the historical and theological foundation to the theatypical approach of the Middle Ages. From this time onwards Christ is ever more removed from humanity with Mary replacing him as the new symbolic human figure. It is Mary who is now seen as providing the redemption of humanity. Christ becomes the representative of God while Mary becomes the representative of the human hope of salvation.⁹⁴ This development of devotion to Mary was partly in reaction to the removal of Christ's human image from him. In turn he came to be seen as the stern authoritarian figure of the Final Judgement. In later medieval thought, even the crucified Christ, stood for the punishment and the judgement of sinners. Christ grew more feared as Mary grew more trusted.⁹⁵ A point, however, has to be made about theatypology from the Middle Ages onwards. That is, it did not thrive in a vacuum but co-existed with christatypology. Unlike theatypology which divinised Mary christatypology, on the other hand, came to mean that Mary was Christ's subordinate *alter ego*. She was the other side of Christ's personality, always portraying his human face and sometimes doing his divine work.

⁹³ See M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 19.

⁹⁴ R. Rutherford, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, p. 62.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Devotions and Apparitions

The above outline shows just how devotion to Mary has grown up over the centuries. Slowly Mary began to take the place of Christ in so many diverse ways. She came to be seen as the kind Mother who could be got around whenever a devotee was in trouble or needed something badly. Christ, the judge was far less likely to grant the request. Mary was warm and feminine, Christ was cold and masculine. Mary could be touched by tears and heartbreak whereas with Christ they would not be so likely to evoke the same positive response. Mary, therefore, came to be revered to an exceptional degree for one who is not a divinity. There are those who would want to retain this exceptional degree of devotion even today. They would argue that devotion to Mary is of the utmost importance claiming that it is acceptable on condition that she does not eclipse Christ. Marian devotionalism in this respect is christatypical of its nature. One proponent of devotional practice to Mary is the Mexican theologian Virgil Elizondo.⁹⁶

Elizondo justifies devotional practices to Mary by claiming that theologians need to reinterpret rather than to reject certain 'popular' religious symbols. He points out that in past decades the tendency of rational theology was to view symbols as fantasies by underlining their ambiguity and then by speaking of them only in negative terms. His concern is that this "leads to an opposition between the religion of the people, which is not looked upon as true faith, and faith in Christ, which appears as the religion of the intellectual elite".⁹⁷ Elizondo has reservations about this dichotomy. If popular devotion and its symbols appear ambiguous to the theologian that is one thing but, he

⁹⁶ V. Elizondo, "Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Cultural Symbol: 'The Power of the Powerless'", *Conc* (1977), pp. 25-33.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

says, it should not be forgotten that it is through popular devotion and its symbols that people relate to the God of Jesus. It is important from a pastoral point of view as well as a theological one to try to find the relationship between the meaning of popular symbols and how they function in relation to the Gospel.⁹⁸

What is to be said of such popular piety? Given the evidence of such phenomena and the sincerity and devotion of those who believe in the apparitions it is difficult to pretend that they are of no great significance to Marian theology. There can be no doubt that popular piety to Mary suffered a setback immediately after the Second Vatican Council. However, it recovered again on its own without any official approval from the Church. There is a constant increase each year in the numbers of pilgrims who visit the great Marian shrines of the world in their millions. Among the more popular are places like Lourdes, Guadalupe, Fatima and Medjugorje. There are also many more alleged apparitions which are too numerous to mention here.⁹⁹ Michael O'Carroll is of the same mind as Elizondo in that he is unhappy with the way the local Church authorities have dealt with these phenomena and claims that their attitude is not uniformly edifying. "To ignore them", he says, "is the policy of the ostrich".¹⁰⁰ O'Carroll goes on to stress the danger of these so-called private revelations.¹⁰¹

O'Carroll explains the distinction between public and private revelation when he points out that public revelation are those truths revealed by God in relation to the salvation that is open to humanity. Private revelation, on the other hand, generally

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ For a detailed account of the apparitions around the world see R. Laurentin, *The Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary Today*, Veritas, 1990.

¹⁰⁰ M. O'Carroll, "Mary, Mother of God", NDT, p. 643.

¹⁰¹ M. O'Carroll, *Mediatress of all Graces*, p. 302.

comes to the soul in the form of a supernatural vision. According, to O'Carroll it is for the Church authorities "to guard, defend and expound the revealed truths of God" while at the same time seeing to it that there is a "fair balance between credulity and scepticism".¹⁰² The main problem, however, is to come to that balance and how can it be assessed? O'Carroll leaves the decision to the official Church authorities but popular piety, particularly Marian popular piety, has not waited for official explanations and dogmas to be pronounced. Without doubt there was an upsurge in Marian popular piety in recent years despite the Council's efforts to relocate devotion to Mary within the context of the Liturgy.

Rene Laurentin, the renowned expert in this area, is generally credulous of apparitions. He has spent years of his life at first being sceptical but finally spending time in trying to authenticate many of them. He is in no doubt that Mary brings messages to the visionaries to pray and do penance. He points out that while the ecclesiastical advisers favour prudence and study, Mary insists on the urgency of her messages. Far from trying to rid the tradition of these scientifically unexplained phenomena, Laurentin seeks an acceptable way of reclaiming them in line with Church teaching and the message of the Gospel.¹⁰³ Laurentin's approach is to accept that Mary does, in many cases, appear but ultimately what is more important is that the visionaries hear again in a new way the message of Christ. He justifies his belief on the grounds that the function of the apparitions is not to complete the gospel in which Christ revealed all that was necessary to our salvation. Instead, it is to "remove the scales from our eyes, to reopen our ears, to actualise the gospel, to insert it into our times and show, once more its power to underline its own life-giving values".¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 302-304.

¹⁰³ M. Laurentin, *The Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary Today*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Yet, having said this Laurentin notes that dogmas of the Church and apparitions appear at different levels in our life of faith. A dogma, he claims, requires total adherence to the Word of God whereas adherence to an apparition does not. He also raises the question of uncertainty. While the visionaries themselves may well be granted certainty as regards the apparitions they have received, it is not necessary for others to believe in them. This is one of the reasons why the various popes have not become arbiters of their authenticity. The matter is left to the local prelate even at times when the matter is of universal interest. The most that can be said about certain apparitions, at an official level, is that there is an acceptance of a high level of probability.¹⁰⁵

Why then is it the opinion of this thesis that devotions to Mary and their corresponding apparitions should be classed as christatypical? In order to answer the question the following points would need to be considered. Firstly, the faithful are not bound by Church teaching to believe in these alleged apparitions. Secondly, the Church in its endless investigations takes many of the major apparitions seriously. Lourdes and Fatima are two cases in point. Thirdly, the Church believes that it is better to err on the side of caution rather than on the side of credulity. Finally, Church teaching has it that revelation ends with the death of the last apostle, therefore, visits from Mary are superfluous. All that we need to know for the betterment of our faith is contained in the gospels. With this conviction nothing can be added to the revelation of Christ. Whether or not Mary appears is not the issue. What is at stake, however, is the Church's inability to offer adequate guidelines concerning devotional practices for people who visit the Marian shrines. If the Second Vatican Council could offer guidelines for Marian practice in general why can it not do so specifically in relation

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

to apparitions? The Church's unwillingness to do this leaves room for confusion and ambiguity.

Perhaps it is impossible for the Church to make a statement either in favour or against the apparitions but while it does not the difficulty with devotionism escalates. Belief in the Marian apparitions while answering the needs of people who have been spiritually undernourished leaves Mary, once again, in an ambiguous position in relation to Christ. While Christ does not show his face Mary assumes the role of his human side. She is the tangible mediator of a distant deity who cannot be reached. She is presence while he is absence; she visits earth while he remains in heaven; she runs back and forth between heaven and earth telling him what the faithful require as if he did not know or care. Mary in this sense is simply the subordinate messenger while at the same time she is the beautiful apparition from heaven who is to be adored just a little less than her Son. She is half human and half divine, she is nothing more or nothing less than the christatype.

Having pointed out some of the ambiguities concerning devotions and apparitions it is now time to consider two titles which have bestowed further unwarranted honour upon Mary. These two titles of co-Redeemer and mediatrix imply that Christ requires Mary's active participation on a par with himself in the salvific process. Hence, the faithful could not be blamed for believing at times that Christ's role in redemption was in some way being usurped. The rejection of these christatypical titles does not suggest that Mary does not have an active part in redemption. On the contrary, she like the rest of humanity, is a co-worker. The systematic elimination of the use of titles such as these makes it easier to find Mary in the fullness of her humanity. It allows the faithful to image a woman who has the capacity to live and die as a woman of faith. In this respect Mary's mortality also becomes the object for consideration.

Once the titles in question have been treated some reference will then be made to traditional teaching on Mary's assumption into heaven.

Co-Redeemer

The classic christatypical title is that of Mary as co-Redeemer or co-Redemptrix/ress. The term was mentioned briefly towards the end of the first chapter as one which the Second Vatican Council documents avoided. While it is no longer in official Church usage it is important to say something of it here because of its christatypical nature and the high value it placed on Mary in relation to the work of redemption. From around the seventeenth century, especially in Spain and France Mary came to be seen as either associate of the Redeemer or co-Redeemer. The title waxed and waned from then up until the pontificate of Pius XI where it blossomed along with many other titles.¹⁰⁶ The Marian scholar Otto Semmelroth's warning in reference to the title states that theologians need to be "careful to steer a middle course between errors of excess and defect".¹⁰⁷

The problem of imaging Mary as co-Redeemer is an obvious one. If she is to be taken as mediatrix between humanity and God there is a theological quandary which leaves the task of Christ's redemption superfluous. In this case Mary would have to merit with Christ to effect salvation. However, this is not possible since Mary's co-redeemership has always been seen as secondary to that of Christ's. In traditional Christianity Christ alone was the source of all merit and Mary as a creature had herself to receive grace and redemption from him. Since in the history of the tradition theologians preferred to find a way around this problem rather than to drop it an understanding of Mary's co-redemption came into being at two levels. A distinction

¹⁰⁶ M. O'Carroll, "Mary, Mother of God", NDT, p. 641.

¹⁰⁷ O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, p. 62.

was expounded between objective redemption and subjective redemption. A brief explanation of this extremely complex theology is to claim that objective redemption is the essential saving work of Christ accomplished through Calvary and the Resurrection. Subjective redemption is the reception of that work by individual souls and how they apply it in their everyday lives.¹⁰⁸

Otto Semmelroth makes the point that the co-redemption problem treats of a too rigid terminological framework. The major difficulty arises when theologians try to decide whether Mary co-operated with the work of redemption as *redemptio objectiva* or only as a *redemptio subjectiva*. If Mary is to be understood in the light of *objective* co-Redeemer then her work is that of one who is directly involved with Christ in the salvation process. If this is the case she is on a par with Christ as a kind of co-principle. This being so Mary is still, of course, subject to Christ but nonetheless cooperates with Christ's salvation, reparation and redemption. To a certain degree, in this respect, Christ can only constitute his work through Mary's cooperation.¹⁰⁹ This is a concept which Semmelroth would not propose on the grounds that Mary could not be the co-worker of her own salvation. Semmelroth reminds us that Mary herself has been redeemed and whatever she contributes to salvation is the result of the grace of that salvation given to her during Christ's process of redemption. Furthermore, Semmelroth would not wish to make an exception of Mary in any way since there was only one redemption and it would be difficult for her to have been saved except in the same way as all other human beings.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ It is not possible to deal with the complexity of these two terms in this paper. However, most Marian theologians prior to the Second Vatican Council attempt to explain the various difficulties with the terms. For a brief guideline see, for example, Michael O'Grady, "Mary's Role in Redemption", *MRed*, pp. 135-158 and Brian Kelly, "Our Lady and Objective Redemption", *ITQ* XXXIII/3 (1966), pp. 242-253.

¹⁰⁹ Again it is important to point out here that there are many variations on the interpretation of the term co-redemption itself. Semmelroth would say that there is a certain vagueness which envelops this point. O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, pp. 72-73.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

On the other hand, Semmelroth justifies Mary's subjective co-redeemership. He bases this on his fundamental principle that Mary is the Archetype of the Church, a theme which will be developed in chapter four of this thesis. Semmelroth holds that it would not be fitting for Mary to have co-operated with redemption in any other way than does the Church herself. However, there is again a difficulty with subjective co-redemption which Semmelroth expresses in the following way:

The difficulty in Mary's participation arises more from the question of her cooperation and mediation of graces than from the inner core of the archetypal mystery. We will see that everything falls with meaningful, indeed necessary, logic into the entire scheme of salvation. But we will not reach this clarity until Mary's co-operation has been firmly grasped in the ecclesiological sense. In other words, her cooperation was influenced by the graces flowing from the completed work of salvation; she took them unto herself in her subjective, moral re-enactment of what Christ wrought. Simultaneously, she received the fruit of His work. There is cloudiness in the terminology and expositions of the authors who prefer the theory of Mary's direct cooperation with *redemptio subjectiva* and this lack of clarity dominates their treatment of the entire problem of co-redemption and cooperation.¹¹¹

It is clear from Semmelroth's stance that Mary's subjective co-redemption is not to be taken in isolation from her role as a (super-eminent) member of the Church where she is to be imaged as its Archetype. While he justifies her position in this regard he does not accept subjective co-redeemership *per se*. Behind this reasoning lies his dissatisfaction with the theological necessity of always having to state explicitly that Mary is subordinate to Christ. If, however, Mary's subjective co-redemption corresponds to her as Archetype of the Church then there is no need for the endless emphasis on her subordination to Christ. In this respect, like any member of the Church, her subordination should be understood.¹¹² Semmelroth uses an official

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

statement from Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis*¹¹³ to make clear his point that all humanity, including Mary, is subordinate to Christ. Pius's teaching is as follows:

Through the Church every man performs a work of collaboration with Christ in dispensing the graces of Redemption, thus acting as 'co-redeemer'.¹¹⁴

However, despite Semmelroth's attempt to justify Mary's subjective co-redeemership in her ecclesial subordination to Christ the area is still open to ambiguity and confusion. The learned theologian Karl Rahner, for example, attempts to justify Mary's position in co-redemption six times in one convoluted paragraph.¹¹⁵ Like most other theologians Rahner holds that Mary is not co-redeemer in one respect. That is:

by the side of Christ, as though the Son and the Virgin 'shared' in the redemption of the world in a kind of 'synergism'. But she co-operates in the redemption of the world, in so far as she does, for the salvation of the whole world and not only for her own, what a human being can and must do in the power of grace and for grace: receive it. She has received in her flesh the salvation of the world from the Holy Spirit through the consent of her faith, she has received for all men and in the most 'corporeal' way the whole of Christ.¹¹⁶

Unlike Semmelroth, Rahner's justification of the co-redemption is not based on ecclesial grounds but on Mary as the perfectly redeemed. In her perfect faith, as Rahner sees it, Mary not only is the Mother of the Lord insofar as she has bestowed upon him his earthly existence from her flesh but also she *becomes* Mother because of the eschatological Event of salvation that takes place in and through her. Rahner refers to Mary's perfect redemption as a dynamic concept since it cannot be defined

¹¹³ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, CTS, 1943.

¹¹⁴ Cited in O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, p. 82.

¹¹⁵ K. Rahner, "The Interpretation of the Dogma of the Assumption", Vol 1, TI, pp. 217-218.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

like a mathematical or geometric equation. It follows then that her total redemption in body and soul is not something which has been arbitrarily invented or postulated. It suggests, rather, that "Mary is the ideal representation of exhaustive redemption because of her unique place in saving history".¹¹⁷

Rahner's explanation of the role of Mary as co-Redeemer casts her, yet again, in a most ambiguous light. Every time the term is used it has to be justified on some theologically acceptable ground or other. The difficulty lies chiefly in the fact that most theologians, like Semmelroth and Rahner, try to express Mary as the perfect human being. Note that unlike the theotypical approach Mary is not to be seen here solely as a divinity but as a perfect human being which gives rise to subtle connotations of semi-divinity. Semmelroth explains her perfect humanity as the Archetype of the Church, thus, in his own way justifying her co-redeemership on this premise. Rahner is of the same mind-set when it comes to seeing Mary as the perfect creature. Except, in Rahner's case, he justifies Mary's co-redeemership in relation to her own perfect redemption. To claim that Mary is the perfect human being appears to be some sort of theological concession on the part of those who try to justify Mary's role in the redemptive process. It is as if to say that while she cannot be attributed with total divinity she can at least be portrayed as one who is perfect in her humanity.

The attempt to portray Mary as a perfect human being brings its own set of difficulties. The Marian theologian Cyril Vollert raises certain questions which give food for thought to those who would wish to image Mary in this way. Vollert writes:

What, then, remains for Mary? Has her presence on Calvary any redemptive meaning? The incarnate Word fully represents humanity; but by God's will, Mary represents aspects of humanity which Christ did not assume. She represents the mere creature, whereas Christ is a

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

divine person; she represents the redeemed, for Christ is not redeemed.¹¹⁸

Vollert's worthy attempt to locate Mary firmly within the human scheme of things has an unfortunate side-effect. He seems at pains to find a place for her in the mystery of redemption but he does not seem sure where she should fit exactly. In this respect Vollert decides that Mary has, indeed, a role to play here but it must not in any way usurp that of Christ's. To avoid this theological predicament Vollert justifies Mary's position on the grounds that she represents what is *left over* after Christ has completed his redemptive work. Now we have the anomaly of a perfect creature who appears to be capable of assuming certain aspects of humanity which Christ as the Saviour of the world is not himself capable of assuming. This despite the fact that Mary is subordinate to him. Thus, it is difficult to see how Christ, the Redeemer of the world, is not equal to that task which is at the very essence of the Incarnation. One would, therefore, ask just what aspects of humanity could Mary assume that Christ could not?

Mediatrix

A second theme which is closely associated with Mary's co-redemption is that of her mediatorship. Like the co-redemptive title Mary as mediatrix is also fraught with ambiguity and inner contradiction. Take, for example, the following statement from the Belgian theologian Joseph Bittremieux. "Christ is the main mediator, Mary is a secondary Mediator; thus, Mary's mediatorship must be stressed as parallel to Christ's but none the less subordinate to His".¹¹⁹ There is hardly need to comment on theological jargon such as this which is confusing to say the least. At one time Mary is subordinate to Christ in her mediatory capacity and at another she is equal to him. Moreover, unlike the title co-Redeemer Mary as mediatrix is more problematic today

¹¹⁸ C. Vollert, *A Theology of Mary*, p. 152.

¹¹⁹ Cited in O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, p. 81.

specifically because it has not been removed from official documents. In chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium* there is a passing reference which says that "the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix".¹²⁰ Although the Council Fathers qualify this statement with the usual reference to Mary's subordination to Christ the title remains contentious.

Out of 570 Council Fathers 382 wanted a pronouncement on Mary's mediation. The lobby for any other item on the agenda at this time comprised of smaller interest groups.¹²¹ Certain popes of the past have also shown a considerable interest in the title and what it meant during their times. Pius IX said that Mary is:

the safest refuge for all who are in peril, the most trusty aid, and with her only-betotten Son, the most powerful mediatrix and reconciler of the world...and she with the entreaties of a mother most powerfully pleads our cause-she obtains, too, whatever she asks, and she cannot be disappointed.¹²²

Leo XIII for his part wrote that:

Therefore it is not less true to affirm that nothing at all from the great treasures of divine grace-supposing that truth and grace have been made by Our Lord Jesus Christ-nothing is given us but through Mary-according to God's Will. So we cannot come to the Father except by the Son and we cannot come to the Son but through the Mother.¹²³

The popes from around this period¹²⁴ up until the time of Pius XII all wrote along

¹²⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, p. 419.

¹²¹ M. O'Carroll, "Mary, Mother of God", *NDT*, p. 642.

¹²² Cited in U. Bourke, *The Bull Ineffabilis*, pp. 75-76.

¹²³ Cited in M. O'Carroll, *Mediatress of All Graces*, p. 159.

¹²⁴ Mary's being recognised as mediatrix went as far back as the fifth century in the tradition. For a detailed historical account see, H. Graef, *Mary - A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 1, pp. 171 ff.

the same lines in relation to Mary as mediatrix. In one final example Pius XII is known to have said:

As a faithful echo to the tradition of the Fathers of the Church, St. Bernard, the great light of the land of Burgundy and of all the Church, teaches us: it is God's will that we shall receive all graces through the hands of Mary. This is a very sweet doctrine that all theologians with one accord defend today.¹²⁵

The sentiment expressed by Pius XII about the theologians' defense of Mary's mediation is by and large a fair assessment. Some years later Otto Semmelroth explains that "God placed Mary in this proximity to Christ instead of leaving all to the mediatory position of the God-man".¹²⁶ The basis of Semmelroth's view stems from his understanding of Mary's co-redemptive role. He claims that it is through her co-redeemership that she received the first fruits of Christ's salvation assuming them for herself and for the Church. Mary's mediation permits these fruits to flow into the Church through her *intercession*. In this way Mary has the capacity to call on the Church to face the Redeemer. Thus, she is moved by grace to assume the work of Christ as pre-eminent representative of the Church.¹²⁷

Within the broader context of the intercession of the saints Elizabeth Johnson also attempts an explanation of Mary's mediatory function. She refers to her as a "special saint"¹²⁸ who continually prays for those on earth whose journey towards God is beset with difficulties. Here Johnson makes a valid distinction between Mary's being called upon in the Church but not by the Church.¹²⁹ The difference in emphasis

¹²⁵ Cited in M. O'Carroll, *Mediatress of All Graces*, p. 159.

¹²⁶ O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, p. 101.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹²⁸ E. Johnson, "Saints and Mary", ST, p. 481.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 483.

places Mary in some way among the community of believers. This is an encouraging and acceptable advance. Nonetheless, Johnson's reference to Mary as a "special saint" is not clear. It could still mean that Mary is a pre-eminent member of the Church. The implication is, therefore, that Mary is again placed in a hierarchical strata somewhere between the Divinity and the members of the Church. Hence, the patron-petitioner model remains intact. It would be better if this strong dependence on Mary as a powerful intercessor were eliminated from the tradition. Would this mean that Mary could not be imaged in any way as an intercessor? One of the realities of the human condition is that we need someone to whom we can pray. For the most part these are prayers of petition. If a member of the Church wishes privately to ask for intercession in this way it would be difficult for any official teaching of the Church to go against such practices.

However, at an official level the Church might try to make a case for the asking of Mary's help *of* herself not *through* herself. Asking Mary to ask the Divinity erects a barrier between humanity and the Divinity preventing a direct approach. The fact that we believe Mary to be with God/Christ in a way that we are not does not necessarily mean that she is any more or less favoured. The very essence of God/Christ's relationship to humanity is that God/Christ does not have favourites (Gal 3:28). Ultimately, Mary is a creature and no doubt like any of God's creatures would prefer to be treated as such. On this earth, for example, very few people would like to be treated as intercessors preferring instead to be asked directly for help where that is possible. It is less compromising and generally far more effective. In Mary's case, then, there is no reason why she cannot be asked for help of herself in a way that any of us might ask a beloved parent, relative, partner or friend who has gone before us and is now with God.

The Assumption

Mary's universal mediation was never defined despite the fact that Pius XI put the question to three different commissions, the Italian, Spanish and Belgian. When Pius XI came to office he turned his attention instead to the Assumption of Mary.¹³⁰ Unlike the titles of Mary's co-redeemership and mediatorship her Assumption into heaven was proclaimed a dogma.¹³¹ Once again, however, as with so many other Marian themes it places her in theological exile. The dogma of the Assumption is something of an enigma. Traditionally Catholic doctrine and dogma would normally develop from either the scriptures or early Patristic literature. According to Marie Farrell, the definition of the Assumption was not supported by either of these sources. In the years immediately surrounding the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption (1950) theological discussion on the matter was contentious.¹³² The complication arose from the fact that there were three interpretative phases applying to the it.

The first phase (1854-1950) saw attempts to interpret the Assumption only in terms of the Immaculate Conception, a dogma defined in 1854.¹³³ Given the sinless state within which Mary was conceived in the world it was now time to concentrate on a dogma which could be associated with her passing from its sinful condition. This phase came to a close in 1950 with the decree of Pius XI when he proclaimed:

¹³⁰ M. O'Carroll, "Mary, Mother of God", NDT, p. 642.

¹³¹ Michael O'Carroll explains that dogmas of the Church do not constitute any new addition to the body of revelation. They are interpreted as being lodged in faith, scripture and tradition. Their unfolding generally comes in three stages. Firstly, there is a practice or a custom in certain churches. Secondly, this is adopted or annexed by the Pope and the Church. Thirdly, there is a final declaration which proclaims the solemn definition of the dogma in question. M. O'Carroll, *Mediatress of All Graces*, p. 260.

¹³² M. Farrell, "The Assumption of Mary - Prophetic Symbol for a Pilgrim People", ACR, LXIX/3 (1992), p. 321.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

We proclaim, declare and define it to be a dogma revealed by God that the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven.¹³⁴

The second phase (1950-1964) did not concentrate singularly on Mary and her privileges. Instead, it focussed on an interpretation of her life in relation to the whole of humanity as one who would experience the fruits of Christ's redemption. This gave the Assumption an eschatological thrust which was the final in a series of transitions marking Mary's life. Within this context the Annunciation represented a transition from pre-Christian to Christian times. Calvary represented a transition from a state of pre-Church to complete ecclesial reality and the Assumption represented the final union of the entire Church with the risen Christ. According to Farrell, both these eschatological and soteriological views were supplemented by "Otto Semmelroth's particular use of ecclesiology in order to show how the Assumption may be considered to be the *typos* of bodily redemption for the whole Church".¹³⁵ The cumulative effect of using such a method, that is, one which *universalised* the Assumption was intended to highlight meaning about the Church.¹³⁶ Such was the method adopted by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. The titles of the eighth chapter of *Lumen Gentium* make the point. These are; "The Function of the Blessed Virgin in the Plan of Salvation";¹³⁷ "The Blessed Virgin and the Church";¹³⁸ "The

¹³⁴ Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, par. 53, p. 21, 1950.

¹³⁵ M. Farrell, "The Assumption of Mary - Prophetic Symbol for a Pilgrim People", ACR, LXIX/3 (1992), p. 325.

¹³⁶ O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, pp. 143-175.

¹³⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, par. 55, p. 415.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, par. 60, p. 418.

Cult of the Blessed Virgin in the Church"¹³⁹ and "Mary, Sign of True Hope and Comfort for the Pilgrim People of God".¹⁴⁰

The third phase (1964-mid 70's) retained the *universalising* soteriological and eschatological compounds of the second phase. This post-Vatican II period coincided with the development of an ecclesiology which had begun to recognise that the Church was a far greater reality than the Church simply as an Institution. The attempt here was to see the Assumption primarily in relation to the whole people of God.¹⁴¹ What, then, is to be said of this brief historical outline of the Assumption of Mary? Farrell, for her part, would justify retention of the dogma in the tradition. As she says:

The dogma of the Assumption refers, first and foremost, to the saving mystery of God in Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. It sets up Mary as one who has experienced a destiny dependent upon a life of discipleship and fidelity to the call involving motherhood of the Saviour.¹⁴²

However, there is a complexity surrounding the Assumption which cannot be so easily related to the saving mystery of God and a life of discipleship as Farrell suggests. In an attempt to establish a solid foundation for Marian devotion outside the universal binding of a dogmatic definition Hans Kung wishes to make the claim that Mary's cult developed from varied extra-biblical factors. In doing so Kung chooses the two dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (theatypical) and the Assumption (christatypical) to make his case. Kung is dissatisfied with the habit of the succession of Popes from Pius IX to Pius XII whom, he claims, promoted Marian devotion by

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, par. 66, p. 421.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, par. 68, p. 422.

¹⁴¹ M. Farrell, "The Assumption of Mary - Prophetic Symbol for a Pilgrim People", ACR, LXIX/3 (1992), pp. 325-326.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 328.

every means. He says that "(from) the nineteenth century Marianism and papalism have gone hand in hand and given each other mutual support".¹⁴³ Kung believes that the peak of this Marian age came in 1950 with the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption. He sees it as something of a papal swansong in a last effort to practice absolute power over against "all Protestant, Orthodox and even Catholic misgivings".¹⁴⁴

Given the strong hierarchical, authoritarian and patriarchal climate of the period to which Kung refers there can be little doubt that there is some truth in his claim. This thesis, therefore, states that the Church used the teaching of the Assumption of Mary to seek its own glorification. The matter is all the more serious when one is aware that there is nothing in the scriptures to suggest that Mary was assumed bodily into heavenly glory at her life's end. Nor was there anything of any great consequence to this effect in the first five centuries of the tradition.¹⁴⁵ The Spanish, Marian theologian Joseph Paredes explains that it was only from the Carolingian period onwards that Mary was imaged as deeply physically united with Christ through her bodily Assumption. Therefore, it was fitting that the mother be bodily glorified with her Son. From around the thirteenth century, quotations from scripture began to be used to show that Mary gave body to him from whom all grace proceeds (Jn 1:17). Also, since Mary had a deep personal relationship with Christ she received the perfect grace from him which led her to the fullness of glory (Rom 8:10-11).¹⁴⁶ The

¹⁴³ H. Kung, *On Being a Christian*, p. 461.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Having said this an understanding of the Assumption of Mary's body and soul into heaven was accepted by the faithful in general. In the sixth century her 'Transitus', 'Dormitus' or 'Assumption' were celebrated on the 15th of August, just as today. The Assumption of Mary occurs in the apocryphal gospels between the fourth and the sixth centuries. These legends recount her death and Assumption. For further details see J. Paredes, *Mary and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 232-241.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

establishment of the close link between Mary and Christ relation to the Assumption continues until the present day.

Is this dogmatic definition logical, coherent or acceptable in any way? It would appear not even although Karl Rahner, the most learned of theologians, for example, accepts the definition. Rahner's case, symptomatic of so many more, is based on christatypical grounds. In his attempt to place the dogma within some specific category of faith Rahner suggests that it belongs to the article of faith "(born) of the Virgin Mary".¹⁴⁷ He goes on to say that this is by no means the only article of the Creed to which the dogma is essentially related.¹⁴⁸ His reasoning lies behind the fact that from ancient times the phrase "born of the Virgin Mary" speaks of an event which does not simply concern the private lives of Jesus and Mary. Instead, it means a *saving event* for the whole world. Since this saving event took place in and through the flesh of Mary our salvation depends upon Christ's having been born of this woman.¹⁴⁹

Rahner's desire to tie the article of faith in question with the Assumption results in the now familiar and necessary justification of the christatypical approach. Thus, the semantics begin:

She lets the Son of God into the world; and she does it only by his power and in virtue of his grace. She can only let him into the prison of the sinful and mortal world because he wishes to come, and because her letting him in is itself again the work of the grace of his coming. But it is she who does it. She could do nothing if he did not grace her by his coming. But he graced her in just such a way that in her (flesh and faith together) the salvation of the world has definitively begun,

¹⁴⁷ K. Rahner, "The Interpretation of the Dogma of the Assumption", Vol 1, TI p. 217.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

and that in her God spoke his final, because total, word in the dialogue between him and humanity which had till then remained open.¹⁵⁰

In true christatypical fashion this passage makes it clear that without Mary's cooperation through faith Christ would have been helpless to effect the salvation of the world. In other words, Mary is subordinate to a divinity who needs her act of faith before salvation can take place. This is not to suggest in any way that Christ does not depend on Mary or humanity to bring about the Reign of God. Christ left us all with that very task. Rather, what is being claimed here is that while Mary like all other human beings has a part to play in the deliverance of God's Reign her *yes* at the Annunciation was not essential for salvation. If Mary had refused, then God being God, would surely have found another way?

Leaving Rahner aside there is also another christatypical element in the dogma of the Assumption and that is its traditional association with the Resurrection. Michael O'Carroll treats of this common acceptance in Church teaching when he claims of the Assumption that it is "but a repetition of the Resurrection".¹⁵¹ He then goes on to remind the reader, in christatypical discourse, that the very important difference between the Assumption and the Resurrection is that Christ raised himself from the dead whereas Mary was not capable of raising herself to glory.¹⁵² Nonetheless, the Assumption and the Resurrection are cited together. Once this takes place there is room for confusion to arise. It is particularly perplexing to discover that not only is there a parallel drawn between the Assumption and the Resurrection in the tradition

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ M. O'Carroll, *Mediatress of All Graces*, p. 267.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* Other authors also draw parallels between the Assumption and Resurrection which is evident from their joint statement that goes as follows, "(the Blessed Virgin Mary shows the way we are to follow. In her Immaculate Conception and her Assumption, she reflected the Incarnation and Resurrection of her Son. When we pray to her, we pray to Jesus who lived in her more fully than anyone else". N. Brennan, D. Forristal, J. Heneghan, D. Lane, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 96.

but one is also made between the Assumption and the Ascension of Our Lord. This parallel is more common in the tradition.

In an attempt to explain the distinction between the two John Macquarrie draws attention to the linguistic characteristics of the word "assumption". He explains that:

As a 'taking up', an assumption (in Greek, *analepsis*) is an act of God, in the performance of which the person assumed remains passive. On the other hand, an ascension (in Greek, *anabasis*) means 'going up' and is a word which gives an active role to the person who goes up.¹⁵³

What Macquarrie wishes to make clear is that the only person who ascended to God was Christ having the capacity to do so of his own accord. Mary's Assumption, on the other hand, is a corollary of the Ascension and dependent on it. Macquarrie's main concern is to show that the Assumption is not a glorification of Mary and to think of it in these terms would infringe the place which belongs to Christ alone. Then Macquarrie goes on to justify the Assumption on the grounds that the Virgin's body could not be laid to waste.¹⁵⁴ However, Macquarrie's claim that the Assumption is not a glorification of her body is not one which can be denied so readily or quickly. It is obvious from the tradition that one major understanding of the theme has, indeed, been to glorify Mary through belief in her bodily Assumption. It has been established in the Church for centuries that since Mary is no mere mortal her being taken body and soul into heaven is consistent with the teaching in the Hebrew scriptures. If this could happen to Enoch and Elijah then it is much more likely to have happened to Mary.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ J. Macquarrie, *Mary for all Christians*, p. 81.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78. See also Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, pp. 81-102 for historical details and also Francis Davis, "Our Lady's Assumption", *MRed*, pp. 187-206.

Leonardo Boff is one modern theologian who describes Mary's risen body as being "enthroned in celestial glory".¹⁵⁶ For Boff, the Assumption means that Mary reigns beside her Son in glory where they abide in love and union beyond our imagining.¹⁵⁷ The official teaching of the Church runs along the same lines. The Second Vatican Council displays the following phrase in its documents "(in) the meantime the Mother of Jesus in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven...".¹⁵⁸ This glorification of Mary, then, which arises out of a belief in the glorious Assumption puts Mary almost on a par with Christ. Christ's Resurrection and glorious Ascension strikes a parallel with Mary's Assumption which is confusing in the extreme. In relation to the rest of humanity official Church teaching sees Mary as the first of many to be thus graced.¹⁵⁹

The Assumption of Mary along with the other christatypical themes outlined above are of little use either to Marian theology or to women. Based as they are on the ambiguities found in history and the tradition it is difficult to see, for example, how one could justify John Macquarrie's belief that "it is not only Mary who is honoured by such titles, but the female sex in general".¹⁶⁰ It is also not possible to agree with Macquarrie when he goes on to say that these titles elevate the position of woman in the tradition since they place a woman in the scheme of salvation and "diminish the reproach that in Christianity women have only a passive and dependent role".¹⁶¹ On

¹⁵⁶ L. Boff, *The Maternal Face of God*, p. 171.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.

¹⁵⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, par. 68, p. 422.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* The Documents say at this point that Mary through her Assumption "is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come".

¹⁶⁰ J. Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians*, p. 98.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

the contrary, christatypical themes of their nature are confusing since at times they portray Mary either as a semi-divinity or as a super-eminent human being.

12. Ruether and Christatypology

The very nature of the christatypical approach and its attendant elements make it almost impossible to take a clear theological stance in relation to Mary. As long as they remain in the tradition the confusion that surrounds these themes will adversely affect Mary's perceived position in the Church. This final section will show that Rosemary Ruether generally is not christatypical in her approach. Although her work betrays some christatypical elements these are sparse by comparison with those found in her theotypically-styled midrashes. Nor is it surprising to find some christatypical themes in Ruether since these run through the Marian works of all theologians. Ultimately what is of greatest significance for this thesis is that some theological means is found by which the Church and Christian feminists can meet. Due to the ambiguous nature of the christatypical approach it could not act as a medium for conciliation.

In the christatypical approach to Marian theology Mary at every theological turn is subordinate to Christ as his quasi-divine, super-human partner. The christatypical privileges are such that while they keep Mary in subordination to Christ they also remove her from her rightful place within humanity. These ambiguities reflect the subordinate position of women in the Church which Ruether so strongly condemns. Ruether has loudly proclaimed her anger at the centuries of cultural thinking which have made "('male') mind dominant over ('female') body, ('male') man over ('female') nature, ('male') God over ('female') creation".¹⁶² No longer, according to Ruether, can we continue to take our symbolism of women from this

¹⁶² R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, p. 77.

tradition. Otherwise women will have no choice but to represent the passive *underside* of everything.¹⁶³ If Mary, in turn, is to become an acceptable symbol for women she must not be imaged as the passive underside of Christ in respect of either her having semi-divinity or super-humanity. For this reason is it not helpful to visualise Mary as one whom Christ has bestowed special *privileges* upon as his subordinate partner.

Ruether: Mary's Co-Redemption

With specific reference to Ruether's understanding of Mary's co-redemptive title she points out that it goes back to the early analogy between Christ as the new Adam and Mary as the New Eve. Since the Fall came through the cooperation of a man and a woman the early Fathers urged that redemption must have come about in the same way. This reflects a certain dis-ease with a doctrine of human salvation which was mediated by the male alone. Mary's role was to be seen to play the female counterpart in the salvific process. Otherwise humanity in its entirety, male and female, could not be saved.¹⁶⁴ Ruether has more to say on the matter and it is here that her acceptance of Mary as co-Redeemer is evident. A method reminiscent of her theatypical midrash is also somewhat apparent in her christatypical approach. In her attempt to bring out the importance of the female role in the tradition Ruether offers a survey of saviour stories ranging from Anath (saviour of Baal) to contemporary feminist writings. This collection of myths and midrashes state her claim that women's writings have been hidden and distorted by patriarchy.¹⁶⁵

Ruether's midrash includes an account of Jesus and Mary as co-Redeemers in Catholic piety. She makes reference to some Franciscan chronicles which tell of the

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁶⁵ R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, pp. 105-134.

power of Mary's co-redemption and her place at Christ's side. Here she possesses by right the whole kingdom of her Son being the one who decides as to whom should and should not enter heaven. It is Mary, for the most part, who will allow entry into heaven on condition that souls live in obedience to her commands.¹⁶⁶ What is explicitly evident in this short summary is that Ruether does not specifically claim semi-divinity or super-humanity for Mary. Nonetheless, she provides a contextual sequence of events which portrays a christatypical series of images. These she uses for the enhancement of women. It seems that what glorifies Mary glorifies women.

Yet, to claim that this kind of christatypical thought is characteristic of Ruether's work would be incorrect. Paradoxically, in her critical-historical analysis she quite clearly does not accept Mary as co-Redeemer. This is evident in her disagreement with the Church's traditional interpretation of Mary's role as co-Redeemer at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25). For Ruether, Mary is not a *co-offerer* at the sacrifice of Golgotha and she claims that there is nothing in John's account to suggest such a view.¹⁶⁷

Perhaps what is of greater consequence is that Ruether's theology clearly contains a belief that Christ should be symbolised in feminine as well as in masculine form. Therefore, to image Mary as the co-redemptive female counterpart to Christ would appear to be superfluous from Ruether's viewpoint. She sympathises, for example, with the habit of the nineteenth century Shakers of placing passages in their Bible in defence of a female Christ. Ruether cites the following extract to make her point:

And after the war of Michael and his angels, by which the Dragon and his angels were cast out of heaven, that is from the regions where Christ had established his kingdom, in the world of spirits; then the Eternal Mother brought forth her own likeness and representative, the Mother Spirit of Christ, in the woman, to whom "was given the two

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

¹⁶⁷ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, p. 39.

wings of a great eagle, that she might fly to her place, from the face of the serpent"...This is the woman, the *Daughter*, in the likeness of the Eternal Father. And when this *Daughter*, who had now become the Mother of the new creation, had escaped from the serpent's power, she was *nourished* in her place in the wilderness, until the time of her manifestation.¹⁶⁸

From extracts such as these Ruether builds up a case. She believes that the image of an exclusively male Christ will forever alienate women from claiming their humanity as women. She asks "(is) it enough to claim that Jesus represents 'generic humanity' or even was an antipatriarchal male, if he alone remains the exclusive face of the redeeming God and of our authentic humanity?"¹⁶⁹ Ruether goes further in that she proposes more than one female image of Christ. She holds that Christ cannot remain trapped in a single *once-for-all* past figure who is said to have completed the work of salvation. Instead, the Christ-image must always help us to find our unrealised potential. In these times of racism, sexism and European chauvinism the image of Christ must take the form of woman as Black, Brown, White and despised. Indeed, the image of Christ must embrace all who find themselves to be the underside of Christian imperialism. Ruether adds that men as well as women need a WomanChrist.¹⁷⁰ If Christ is imaged in this way then there is no need for Mary to be imaged as co-Redeemer. Ruether's understanding of WomanChrist would eliminate the need to visualise Mary as Christ's female counterpart in the co-redemptive

¹⁶⁸ Cited in R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, p. 129. It should be noted here that the extract cited is taken from a longer passage which makes reference to a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, a crown of twelve stars on her head and in the throes of childbirth. She is about to bring forth the "man-child" or the Messiah while at the same time in triumph for she treads the Evil One underfoot. In Catholic Christianity this woman was taken to mean Mary and it is an interpretation which is inspired by Apocalypse 12:1-18. The Shakers, for their part, do not specifically interpret Apocalypse 12 in this way preferring to make a direct link between the passage and Christ in female form. For further deliberation on the main themes of the Apocalypse see, for example, V. Sproston, *Good News in Revelation*, Fontana, 1977, W. Riley, "Temple Imagery and the Book of Revelations", PIBA 6 (1982), pp. 1-96, A. Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*, Westminster Press, 1984 and E. Schussler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, Fortress Press, 1985.

¹⁶⁹ R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, p. 112.

¹⁷⁰ R. Ruether, *Womanguides*, pp. 112-113. See also Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, pp. 150-167 for images of Christ which transcend both male and female in a later and more comprehensive approach than Ruether's.

process. Overall, given such a view it would be inaccurate to attribute to Ruether a tendency to favour Mary as co-Redeemer.

Ruether: Mary's Mediation

Where some shades of grey are to be found in Ruether's understanding of the co-Redemption there are none concerning her views on the mediatrix title. Using her critical-historical method Ruether returns to the theology of the Middle Ages to remind the reader that Mary was imaged as the representative of redeemed humanity before the Fall. In this scheme of things devotion to Mary and requests for her mediation increased proportionately to Christ's being seen primarily as the stern judge of Judgement Day. Even in later Medieval theology where much attention is given to the crucified Christ he remains a terrifying figure who condemns unforgivable human guilt. As Ruether explains "(the) paradox of the just and merciful God is dissolved into divine wrath (Jesus) and a human woman (Mary) representing mercy".¹⁷¹ In this way Mary is the understanding mother who can make allowances for the inadequacies of human nature. The stronger the fear of Christ the greater the likelihood that trust is transferred from him to Mary. Even if one is a great sinner devotion to Mary guarantees a chance of salvation.¹⁷²

All of this encouraged a belief in Mary as the mediatrix of grace. It is at this stage that Ruether voices her difficulties with the theme of Mary's mediation. As she says:

The split between justice and mercy, between Christ and Mary, also allowed the stereotypes of female fickleness and partiality to color the ideas about Mary as vain and capricious in her favors, in dubious situations protecting those devoted to her. She can be temperamental toward those who neglect her worship, not unlike her secular counterpart, the "lady" of courtly love tradition. Mary's image is

¹⁷¹ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, p. 62.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

modeled after contemporary feudal society. She is the beautiful mistress of the heavenly court, the tender and merciful confidante of the trembling peasant, who could plead his cause with her against the anger of the lords of the castle.¹⁷³

Here Mary is seen as the mediatrix in place of her Son who could not refuse any request asked of him by his mother. Mary becomes the humanising element in a situation where heaven/hell and divine majesty/human sin were the intolerable opposites. No person would dare to find their way to heaven except through Mary.¹⁷⁴ Given these reasons Ruether does not espouse the concept of Mary's mediation. The hierarchical foundation upon which a belief in Mary's mediation was built is completely rejected by Ruether. Again Ruether would not be likely to espouse the ambiguity of Mary's power over her Son. In this respect Mary is at one time in a subordinate position to her Son as one of his creatures and at another time she has enough influence to extract what is requested of her by her devotees.

Ruether: Mary's Assumption

In Ruether's view both the Assumption of Mary and the Ascension of Christ represent the promise of the final resurrection of humanity. Together these imply an unnecessary duplication of the symbol of the Resurrection.¹⁷⁵ The assumed Mary is the reigning Queen of heaven sitting at the right hand of Christ ruling over all the emperors of the earth. Specifically, in reference to the Assumption, Ruether believes that Mary once more "becomes a tool of ecclesiastical triumphalism".¹⁷⁶ This belief of Ruether's is centred around the fact that male eschatology is built on the negation of the mother figure. The traditional rejection of sexuality and procreation is based on

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁷⁶ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, p. 144.

the fantasy that if one can escape the female realm of sexuality and procreation one can also escape from finitude and death.¹⁷⁷

In the tradition the eschatological Church has already escaped such limitations in anticipating the Reign of Christ. The very essence of the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary is that it symbolises the Church triumphant which is seated also at the right hand of Christ in heaven. All the old male/female parallels appear again in this imagery. Christ accepts Mary (the Church) to be his bride as he crowns her Queen of Heaven. As Christ's queen, Mary commands the respect of the still shuffling peasants of the earth. This sets the scene that justifies the present reign of Christian hierarchical authorities. For Ruether, therefore, it is not contradictory but understandable that a male celibate culture exalted the symbol of the spiritual feminine of Mary as *Mater Ecclesiae*. The belief in the Assumption is the final stage of the quasi-divinisation of Mary while at the same time vilifying and demonising the sexual and maternal roles of real women.¹⁷⁸

Ruether has it, then, that the doctrine of the Assumption represents formulations of a theology which sees Mary as the sinless matrix of a sinless Christ. Hence, Mary is beyond corruption from the grave. Her Assumption (like her Immaculate Conception) reaches back to the lost alternative before the Fall. Mary is the one who preserves the original nature which God saw as *very good* in the beginning. Of this kind of theology Ruether says that "we sense the hidden and repressed power of femaleness and nature as they exist both beneath and beyond the present male dualisms of matter and

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Interestingly, Ruether has found that in the early tradition Jesus does not ascend of his own accord but is also "taken up" into heaven. This is clear from Acts where it says "(this) Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses" (Acts 2:32-33). R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, p. 62.

¹⁷⁸ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, p. 145.

spirit".¹⁷⁹ It is precisely for this reason that we cannot accept the dogma of the Assumption. As Ruether has pointed out the theme represents a theology which has been expressed in hierarchical and patriarchal terms. This is just one more symbol of traditional Marian theology where ordinary women must be sundered from their mortal bodies while Mary retains hers intact. Here is a symbol which is used to scapegoat women as the cause of mortality alienating them from that fruitful unity of body and mind.¹⁸⁰

The New Israel

Is Mary to be accepted as a possible symbolic figure of identification for women? Given the complexity and ambiguities of both the theotypical and christatypical traditions modern feminist theologians could not be criticised ultimately for rejecting Mary from their theological enquiry. Furthermore, those who wish to salvage the image of Mary do not appear so far to have thought about eliminating these regressive aspects of Marian theology. Instead, they have taken certain theotypical and christatypical symbols and tried to reinterpret them in a new way.¹⁸¹ At times Rosemary Ruether has also used certain of the themes in question. Nonetheless, she did so in order to enhance the position of women in the tradition. She decries the many different ways that Mary has been wrongly imaged very often to keep women in subordinate positions.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ See, for example, J. Macquarrie, *Mary for all Christians*, Collins, 1990, J. Paredes, *Mary and the Kingdom*, St. Paul Publications, 1990, C. O'Donnell, *At Worship with Mary*, Michael Glazier, 1988. The same criticism applies to female theologians. See, for example, K. Borresen, "Mary in Catholic Theology", *Conc* 168 (1983), pp. 48-56, C. Halkes, "Mary and Women", *Conc* 168 (1983), pp. 66-73 and M. Hines, "Mary and the Prophetic Mission of the Church", *JEcumStuds* 28:2 (1991), pp. 281-298.

She believes that something can be salvaged from the tradition provided that Mary is seen as "the representative of *Natura pura*, the capacity of the created nature for perfection".¹⁸² This does not suggest that some kind of covert image of Mary as a super human being should be employed. Rather, the significance is to be found in Mary's *capacity* to represent pure humanity.¹⁸³ In this respect Mary becomes representative of humanity in its original goodness. She anticipates the final glory of the human community as it was always meant to be. In her original goodness Mary becomes the hope of humanity, the new Israel or the *persona ecclesiae*.¹⁸⁴ In this way of thinking the emphasis is placed not on the original sin of humanity and the necessity to remove Mary from it. Instead, the emphasis is on the goodness of a human being who has the capacity to be recognised as a true representative of the Church. Here an ordinary woman becomes the focus of goodness and truth. She does so not through any doctrine which makes of her an unreal spectre with a protective aura. Instead, she becomes the model of active reciprocity in all things human in relation to God. Mary's relationship to God comes in and through her role as the *persona* of the New Israel.

Mary as the *persona* of the New Israel especially represents the feminine. Here women can find a new kind of belonging in the Church knowing that there is a completely different way of imaging her from that of the two approaches in the above debate. The basis of this new and different approach lies in the ecclesiastical model of Marian theology. This model portrays a woman who is at home with other women, the Daughter of Zion,¹⁸⁵ the suffering one, who awaits the coming of the Lord. In her

¹⁸² R. Ruether, *New Woman New Earth*, p. 55.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Michael O'Carroll explains that in the New Testament this title was applied to express the corporate personality of Israel. Nowhere here is Mary referred to as the Daughter of Zion. However, a

goodness and purity Mary represents the oppressed and sometimes faithless Israel, the poor ones. As a woman in travail she waits until her children are born to a new life.¹⁸⁶

It will be shown in the fifth chapter that Mary has often been portrayed in such a light by the tradition. In addition, it will be suggested that it is possible to salvage Mary as a model for women by extracting both the theotypical and christatypical themes from her symbolism. Whether or not the traditionalists in the field will accept the elimination of some of Mary's most honoured privileges is another matter. However, the ecclesiastical model of itself will use simply what has been employed already in the tradition to date. It is radical only in that it removes the unacceptable tenets of the aforementioned Marian tradition. In this respect at least, the traditionalists, should be able to identify with what remains. In the meantime, there is a reminder here that this thesis is not solely about Marian theology. Rather, it is about finding a common denominator between the official teaching of the Catholic Church and its Christian feminists through the medium of Marian theology. For this reason, it will be necessary to focus on some of the more significant attempts by the Church authorities to dialogue with its women.

The next chapter will outline the Church's official position on women by selecting certain current documents proposed by the American National Conference of Catholic Bishops written in conjunction with women in attendance. Following that a brief account will be taken of an official document drawn up by John Paul II on the dignity of women. In turn Ruether's response to some of the documents emerging from the bishops' Conference will be discussed. From here it will be shown that while

study of the Lukan infancy narrative has prompted comparison with texts of the Hebrew scriptures (Zech 9:9, Mt 21:5, Jn 12:15) which New Testament scholars identified with Mary. According to O'Carroll both Catholic and Protestant thinkers have defended this interpretation. M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 116.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

some progress has been made the overall aim of bringing the authorities and Christian feminists to mutual agreement has a long way to go. Within the context of liberation, however, both official Church teaching and Ruether share a common bond. This is witnessed in the liberating aspects of the *praxis* of Jesus as found in the liberation theology of Latin America. Only after this has been discussed will it be possible to find a base for a common Marian theology founded upon the ecclesiatypical approach.

O WOMAN WHAT HAVE YOU TO DO WITH ME?

____ Part Five ____

13. Documents of Appeasement

The last two chapters have demonstrated that there are two models of Marian theology which are no longer likely to be acceptable to the majority of Catholic women. These theatypical and christatypical approaches are the preservation of a history of male experience for male purposes. As a result women have been left with a legacy of Marian theology in the Church which does not, for the most part, reflect their female experience. It was intimated at the end of chapter three, however, that there is a need to show that the Church authorities and its feminist thinkers are not totally alienated from one another. Therefore, what the first part of this chapter proposes to do is to move outside of Marian theology in order to outline some of the more significant attempts at change by the Church itself in relation to women. A number of these are in the form of statements coming from the popes themselves since the Second Vatican Council and some are proposals coming from *around the table dialogues* between the American bishops and women. (The American Church authorities have been chosen as the example given that their documentation is the most widely known and easily accessible). The most that can be said in favour of the outcome of these events is that there was good will on both sides. Otherwise, to date, the talks have not been as successful as might have been hoped.

Ruether's response to the first of the three American bishops' draft Pastorals will be outlined below. The main principle of her argument applies to all three since no major significant changes were made between the first and the third Pastorals. At the time of writing a fourth attempt to draw up a complete pastoral document failed completely.

Brief reference will be made to this in context. Lest the outcome of the dialogue between the bishops and women be dismissed too readily as the last ditch effort between the Church officials and its female members it is necessary to state that there are other avenues open. One of these is based on the fact that there is a common denominator within the Church applying to both sides (outside of Marian theology). That is, there is a common ecclesiology to be found between Ruether's work and certain documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. These refer specifically to the liberation theology of Latin America and include the two basic important themes of *The Reign of God* and the *Praxis of Jesus*. While the aim of this thesis is not to be limited to Latin American liberation theology it should be noted that it provides a basis for an ecclesiology which points to a general unity of *praxis* and vision within the Church. These basic Christian principles are significant for the final chapter of the thesis which focuses on an ecclesiatypical approach.

The second part of the present chapter, therefore, will lay the foundation for such an approach by returning to certain possibilities for a Marian ecclesiatypology. From here it will become evident that there has been something of a satisfactory attempt by the authorities, especially since the Second Vatican Council, to change Mary into a more realistic role model. It was here that the basis of a new approach, namely the ecclesiatypical, came into existence. The ecclesiatypical approach finds its roots in the early Fathers and has survived in the tradition from that time until the present day.

Attempts at Change

What then is to be said of women's issues and the Church's official teaching? Sally Cunneen makes a significant point found in the following statement:

If we were to deal with goals alone, the most conservative prelate and the most radical woman would probably agree that we should help poor families and fight pornography. But their different experiences

and ways of thinking would make them disagree wildly on the means to carry out these goals. It is not enough, therefore, to deal with 'issues', for merely analysing issues in a rational manner does not help us connect the truth on both sides. Truth is not a possession; it must be sought and shared. If we are to plan for the future we need to uncover a common vision of the Church and its mission.¹

There are many feminist theologians who think that it is too late to uncover a common vision. The difficulty was shown particularly in some themes pointed out in the first chapter of this paper. Feminist theologians such as Mary Daly and Daphne Hampson have left their respective Christian churches because they "disagree wildly" with the Church's attitude to women. The last place many feminists might be inclined to look for the uncovering of a common vision on women's issues would be in official Church documents. Daly for example says that the history of the Catholic Church in relation to women is a record of contradictions.² While the early Daly saw some signs of hope and progress in the papal documents of John XXIII and Paul VI³ the later, post-Christian Daly, does not believe that the papal documents were serious attempts at change. These documents were so nuanced that she had to read them twice in order to understand the hopeful prognostications offered. She writes:

Because of the bizarre content of these citations (papal documents) their pomposity and internal inconsistency, I at first thought that they were from a body of satirical literature...a second and more careful reading of the section convinced me I had missed the point.⁴

On reading any papal documents or, other official Church documents one can, indeed, sympathise with Daly's point of view. She, and people who think like her in this regard, have cast aside official documents because of their unacceptable inconsistencies. However, this practice is for the post-Christian feminist. Those who

¹ S. Cuneen, "Women's Issues, Church/World Issues", DL 38/3 (1988), p. 124.

² M. Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, pp. 74-117.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁴ Cited in R.F. Wilson, "Human Liberation and Theology: An Examination of the Theology of Gustavo Gutierrez, James H. Cone, and Mary Daly", Dissertation, p. 200.

have not left the Church live with its "pomposity and inconsistencies" but this does not mean that they have to accept them wholeheartedly as something to be borne in silence. Those days are gone. What is important is to search through the official documents in order to weed out the inconsistencies and then try to find out if there is anything worth redeeming.

One document worthy of selection is the extraordinary Letter *Pacem in Terris*⁵ written by Pope John XXIII shortly before his death in 1963. *Pacem in Terris* treats extensively of the rights and obligations affecting persons and societies in the economic and political spheres of life. What is noteworthy is the observation of Pope John that something has occurred in the consciousness of people within the realm of contemporary human experience. His idea was unusual for its time in that it expressed such a phenomenon in relation to the role of women. Pope John told the people of the world that one of the key signs of contemporary life was the awakening desire of women for free and responsible participation in determining their own lives. He writes:

...the part that women are now playing in political life is everywhere evident. This is a development that is perhaps of swifter growth among Christian nations, but it is also happening extensively, if more slowly among nations that are heirs to different traditions and imbued with a different culture. Women are gaining an increasing awareness of their natural dignity. Far from being content with a purely passive role, or allowing themselves to be exploited, they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons.⁶

Since *Pacem in Terris* other Church documents began to mention women in relation to the socio-economic and political atmosphere of the times. These statements, for the most part, addressed the issue as it existed in social institutions both outside and

⁵ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, CTS, 1963.

⁶ *Ibid.* par. 41, p. 19.

inside the Church. The Vatican Council document *Gaudium et spes*,⁷ could say, for example:

At present women are involved in nearly all spheres of life; they ought to be permitted to play their part fully according to their own particular nature. It is up to everyone to see to it that women's specific and necessary participation in cultural life be acknowledged and fostered.⁸

Anne Patrick writing a commentary on *Gaudium et spes* refers to it as a *ground-breaking* document. Her impression is that *Gaudium et spes* struck forcefully on a female population waiting to implement their ideas and take them beyond anything envisaged by the Fathers of the Council. Even though the Council's view of justice in regard to women was somewhat limited in its reporting the document paved the way for Christian feminists to find a more adequate vision of justice. This would be particularly true among Catholics who might have been otherwise forced to choose between traditional Catholicism and secular feminism.⁹

Gaudium et Spes not only makes statements on social justice but it also does so in relation to academic and theological learning. It is unlikely that the men of the Council ever anticipated the sort of contributions made by theologians like Rosemary Radford Ruether or Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza. Indeed, references to theological learning at the time are strongly male orientated and betray an androcentric bias. For example, one paragraph reads that "(those) involved in theological studies in seminaries and universities should be eager to cooperate with men (*hominibus*) versed

⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, pp. 903-1014.

⁸ *Ibid.*, par. 60, p. 965.

⁹ A. Patrick, "Toward Renewing 'The Life and Culture of Fallen Man': *Gaudium et spes* as Catalyst for Catholic Feminist Theology", *QSpecUrgen*, pp. 55-57.

in other fields of learning by pooling their resources and points of view".¹⁰ The implication on the part of the Fathers is that those in fields of intellectual learning are overwhelmingly if not exclusively male. However, a much more positive statement found in the same paragraph of *Gaudium et Spes* says:

Furthermore, it is to be hoped that more of the laity will receive adequate theological formation and that some among them will dedicate themselves professionally to these studies and contribute to their advancement. But for the proper exercise of this role, the faithful, both clerical and lay, should be accorded a lawful freedom of inquiry, of thought, and of expression, tempered by humility and courage in whatever branch of study they have specialized.¹¹

Despite the decidedly androcentric bias of the former statement the latter one quite clearly leaves the way open for women to interpret in their favour that passage which refers to lay people in general. The above passage does not specifically rule out (nor does any other in the document) the participation of women in theology. Despite the ambiguity of the two paragraphs it is probably safe to assume at this stage that the Council would welcome any contribution that women might make to theology in the future. At the very least, the comments found in *Gaudium et Spes*, are a rebuttal to the old arguments against women's advancement in society. There is an advance of some significance when one considers the prejudicial comment of Cardinal James Gibbons writing towards the end of the last century. In singing the praises of what Christianity has done for women he says:

Only a few years ago it provoked laughter to hear that Miss Jemima Snarl was to lecture on "Woman's Rights," or that Dr. Mary Walker had appeared on Broadway in male habiliments *cap-a-pie*. But now it is quite ordinary to hear of ladies, gentlemen, gentlewoman, daughters of some of our country's best men, not, indeed, imitating Dr. Mary Walker's exceptional attire, but mounting the rostrum to harangue their audiences on the power of the "Faith Healers" or the merits of the

¹⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, par. 62, pp. 967-968.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, par. 62, p. 968.

"Salvation Army." Is it any wonder that such feelings creeps over one that such things should be?¹²

From the time of the Second Vatican Council, on the other hand, a considerable number of official documents showed that the Church was becoming ever more conscious of women's place in society and the Church. In an Apostolic Letter (1971) Pope Paul VI noted with approval that:

...in many countries a charter for women which would put an end to an actual discrimination and would establish relationships of equality in rights and of respect of their dignity is the object of study and lively demands.¹³

He also went on to identify sex as a basis for discrimination:

Among the victims of injustice - unfortunately no new phenomenon - must be placed those who are discriminated against in law or in fact, on account of their race, origin, color, culture, sex or religion.¹⁴

In the same year the synodal document, *Justice in the World*,¹⁵ showed concern for women's participation in the Church when it said that "(we) also urge that women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church".¹⁶ In addition, both Popes Paul VI and John Paul II have written about the role of women in documents relating to Mary.¹⁷ In fact, John Paul has written a document exclusively on women in recent years.¹⁸ While the content of these documents leaves, at times, much to be desired there is at least

¹² J. Gibbons, *Our Christian Heritage*, pp. 362-363.

¹³ Cited in N. Foley, "Woman in Vatican Documents 1960 to the Present", *SChurLaw*, p. 87.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Synod of Bishops *Theology of Justice in the World*, Vatican City, 1971.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁷ Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, par. 34, pp. 59-60 and John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, par. 45, pp. 101-104.

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, CTS, 1988.

some attempt on the part of the official Church authorities to admit of the need for societal and ecclesiastical changes. A more detailed account of these writings will be given in the appropriate sections below.¹⁹

Besides the documents of Vatican 11 and the papal statements there are other official Church publications relating to women which are of a secondary but significant nature. Some of these have been drawn up by Episcopal Conferences with the permission of the Vatican in the hope that there might be genuine dialogue between women and the Church. With regard to the Episcopal Conferences it would be impossible to examine all of these who treat of women's issues on their agenda. That would take another research paper. For this reason only one Episcopal Conference has been taken as an example, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States, (hereafter NCCB). The American bishops have been chosen as exemplary in that they have been most persistent in their task in recent years. A further point to be noted at this juncture is that many of the women present at the Conference are theologians.

"Partners in the Mystery of Redemption"

Between the years 1988 and 1992 three major drafts were drawn up by the bishops of America in relation to women's concerns within the Church. At the time of writing a fourth draft failed to gain the two thirds majority required of a document to qualify for Pastoral Letter status. The chief reason, yet again, was the Church's teaching on the ordination of women. Opposition to this draft was especially high among the women most involved in the Church. These included women theologians, religious educators and certain employees in chanceries and parishes. It should be noted, nonetheless, that

¹⁹ For a detailed account of women's place in the documents of the Church in the decade following the Second Vatican Council see N. Foley, "Woman in Vatican Documents 1960 to the Present", *SChurLaw*, Paulist Press, pp. 82-107.

although this draft did not gain official status its findings are to be left over for further meetings of the Conference.²⁰ Despite the failure of the fourth draft, however, the Conference documents are far in advance of anything that has been produced to date by any of the documents coming from the Vatican. Although some would argue that John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem*,²¹ which was written in between the first and second drafts of the Episcopal letters, supercedes the Bishops efforts.²² (For organisational purposes *Mulieris Dignitatem* is not being taken chronologically but will be dealt with in a later subsection.)

The first draft entitled "Partners in the Mystery of Redemption"²³ (hereafter PMR) is intended as a pastoral response to women's concerns in Church and society. As far back as 1972 the Catholic bishops of the United States formed an *Ad Hoc* committee in order to address women's issues and recommend some course of action. By 1977 the committee had met with representatives of various women's organisations and had commissioned that research should be taken in a number of areas. The point of the survey was to find out what roles were and were not being filled by women in the Church. In 1982 there was a unanimously approved proposal to develop a pastoral document to consider the questions. (PMR 4)

²⁰ NCCB, "Partners in the Mystery of Redemption", *Origins* 17/45 (1988), pp. 758-788; "One in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Response to the Concerns of Women in the Church and Society", *Origins* 19/44 (1990), pp. 718-740; "Called to be One in Christ Jesus", *Origins* 21/46 (1992), pp. 763-775 and "One in Christ Jesus", *Origins* 22/29 (1992), pp. 489-508. See also Tom Reese who writes an interesting commentary on why this final document has failed to gain the two thirds majority. T. Reese, "Women's Pastoral Fails", *America* 167/18 (1992).

²¹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, CTS, 1988.

²² One such point of view taken from the Jesuit editor of a conservative clerical journal in reference to "Partners in the Mystery of Redemption" goes as follows: "(many) have expressed the view that the bishops' letter is not really needed, since the Holy Father has spoken. If they do proceed with it, it is my hope that they will perform radical surgery on it both by reducing the excessive length and by eliminating the offensive, secular feminism that so obviously runs through the letter". K. Baker, "A Theology of Woman", *HPR* LXXXIX/6 (1989), p. 80.

²³ NCCB, "Partners in the Mystery of Redemption", *Origins* 17/45 (1988), pp. 757-788.

It is not possible to go into the details of the survey here but, briefly, the drafting committee received feedback from 100 dioceses in the United States with approximately 75,000 women responding. These were women of all ages, status and colour but mostly caucasian. They were single, married widowed, divorced, lesbian, religious and lay. Sixty college campuses and forty five military bases were also approached. These women greeted the project with varying attitudes ranging from enthusiasm and relief through to disbelief and antagonism. (PMR 8, 9) A number of the committee did not want the bishops to write a pastoral on women at all. Their reasons were varied. Firstly, some felt that male leaders were not in the position to write such a document. Secondly, others wanted more time for the development of Church discussion on women's issues before such an important paper was published and thirdly some believed that the entire basic concept was flawed because it implied that women themselves were the problem.²⁴ Some women asked the bishops to offer contrition in the process while others were not happy with any change and wanted the bishops to uphold Catholic tradition as it had always been. The traditionalists hoped that the bishops would not yield to contemporary pressures and that their Pastoral, when completed, would reflect the perennial teachings of the Church. (PMR 8, 9)

This first draft in question is a rather lengthy one but a few of the more salient points will be selected here in order to show that the Church is not only aware of the women's issue but in its huge and impossible machinery there are those within the hierarchy who are genuinely concerned to effect change. The bishops themselves admit in the document:

The diversity among Catholic women contradicts the claim that there is a typical Catholic woman, easily defined and understood, whose needs and wants are readily identifiable. Catholic women are extremely diverse in their concerns, yet in this diversity common themes do appear. (PMR 12)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 761.

However, a consensus among members of the committee and their consultants agreed that they should finish the work they had begun. The Pastoral was not to be *about women* but *about women's concerns*.²⁵ The first major difficulty was the problem of not only the rampant sexism constant in the tradition from the early Fathers down but the covert misogyny still present in the Church in contemporary times. The bishops were asked to name the sin of sexism which they did in a number of fairly lengthy paragraphs. A sample goes as follows:

Acknowledging the subtle presence of sexism and affirming the equality and dignity of women is only a first step. We must and do pledge to reject clearly and consistently human structures and patterns of activity that in any way treat women as of lesser worth than men. When our actions do not conform to our ideals, all suffer. We therefore regret and confess our individual and collective failures to respond to women as they deserve. We call the people of God to join us in personal and corporate contrition for the sins of sexism that violate the basic tenets of our faith. ...We further commit ourselves to support legislation that fosters the efforts of women to achieve professional roles and to have access to public functions on a basis equal to men. (PMR 41)

The equality problem was the next item with which the Conference had to deal. They made the point that prior to the Second Vatican Council official Church teaching did not directly address the question of whether and in what respects women were equal to men. While women were regarded as having equal dignity they were still assigned subordinate roles both inside and outside the Church. They also accepted the fact that over the centuries the scriptures were interpreted in such a way as to make women appear inferior. In order to prove that the Church today does not believe the same of women the Conference takes a quotation from the Second Vatican Council which affirms the basic equality of all persons. This reads as follows:

It is regrettable that these basic personal rights are not yet being respected everywhere, as is the case with women who are denied the

²⁵ *Ibid.*

chance freely to choose a husband, or a state of life, or to have access to the same educational and cultural benefits as are available to men.²⁶

Further evidence of serious commitment to women in this regard is the Conference's reference to one of Paul VI's statements. Paul VI talks of the need for the recognition of laws which will respect the civil rights of women leaving them on an equal footing with men both professionally and politically and also which will protect the prerogatives of women in marriage, in social circumstances and educationally. (PMR 31, 33)

Many, many more issues that were raised by the survey were responded to in the same positive vein by the committee. Throughout the draft document attention was given to such areas as motherhood; sexuality and the dignity of women; men's responsibilities in relation to women; the trauma of divorce and interfaith marriages; birth control; single and married people; parenting; work in the home; celibacy and vocations; economics and injustice in the home and marketplace; injustice in the Church itself; violence against women; Mary of Nazareth and her relationship to women; women's difficulty with decision making processes in the Church; the insensitivity of certain clergy when dealing with women and the use of exclusive language within the Church; the ordination of women and women's contribution to the Church down through the ages up until today. (PMR 50 - 246)

The overall tone of the entire document is very positive and great efforts were made to examine honestly and deal with practically all that concerns women. However, there is no real point in simply reiterating that the committee in its first draft did well, praise them and leave it there. While great strides were made on the part of the hierarchy many of the real problems were not solved. For example, there are the contentious issues of family planning and the use of artificial contraception, abortion,

²⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, Translated in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, par. 29, p. 929.

divorce, the use of exclusive language in Church services and the ordination of women. Since these were some of the main problems between women and the Church raised in the first chapter a brief reference to the response by the bishop's committee on them will be outlined here.

In very recent years the Church has begun to use inclusive language in some of its liturgical services and even some versions of the Bible have been translated to the same effect.²⁷ In time it is hoped that this problem will be solved. Abortion and divorce, on the other hand, are extremely complex. Church teaching on these remains constant for two reasons. Firstly, in relation to abortion the draft committee would be unlikely to be able to effect major policy changes too readily in an area which is considered to be detrimental to human life as it exists within the womb. Secondly, in relation to divorce the Church holds that it is not possible to change what is believed to be the direct teaching of Jesus himself when he speaks about the subject in the Gospel (Mt 19:6).

This is not to suggest that these matters should not be seriously considered time and again but it is easier to see why they would be of a much more contentious nature than contraception or the admission of women to the ministerial priesthood. Neither of these are mentioned in the scriptures and neither of them are life threatening. Unfortunately, the draft document does not move one inch from Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* in 1968.²⁸ Nor does it take any significant step forward from the teaching of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in *Inter insigniores* of 1976.²⁹ The ruling

²⁷ *The New Revised Standard Version Bible*, World Bible Publishers Inc., 1989.

²⁸ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, CTS, 1968.

²⁹ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter Insigniores*, CTS, 1976.

on contraception and on the non-admission of women to the ministerial priesthood are probably the most difficult with which women have had to come to terms.

The official position of the Church on family planning is upheld by the NCCB in the document in question which says that artificial contraception is a contradiction to the divine plan for propagation. The most the document has to offer in this respect, unlike *Humanae Vitae*, is that along with reiterating this teaching a dialogue must be fostered between those who find artificial contraception unacceptable and those who find that natural family planning has enriched and preserved their marriages. There is a promise to consult with women in this matter so that dialogue will lead to formulation of better policies and preparation for family planning. Men, for their part, are asked to take seriously their responsibility in procreation, sexuality and parenting. The blame for their sexual behaviour is never to be placed on women and they ought not urge women to choose abortion as an alternative to pregnancy. (PMR 121, 122)

Many feminist theologians often regard the women's ordination question to be the real test of sincerity for change in the Catholic Church. In this respect the NCCB has badly failed. They simply reiterate that "all the baptised participate in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ" (PMR 218) but women's ordination cannot be. It is not normative to the tradition of the Church, nor does the Church "consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination". (PMR 217) The NCCB point out that Church tradition cannot change this ruling because they believe it to be the will of the Lord and the Church has no choice but to follow that will. For this reason the non-ordination of women in the Catholic Church has nothing to do with injustice or inequality or that women are in any way inferior to men. (PMR 217) However, the NCCB calls for further study on the matter in order to deepen the Church's understanding of the relationship of this question to Christian anthropology, the question of Holy Orders itself and ministry in the Church in general. (PMR 219)

Nothing more is said on the matter and the latter statement is ambiguous. In what way, for example, can the Church's understanding be deepened if official teaching has it that the Lord has spoken? Are the NCCB in fact saying that with further study a new interpretation of the Lord might be found in relation to women's ordination? The document unfortunately does not specify what it means by further study except to say that:

Such study could help to place in the proper light the Church's consistent practice; penetrate more deeply insofar as is humanly possible the mystery of the eucharist, especially the identification of the sacrifice of Calvary with the sacrifice of the altar; and clarify more explicitly the identification, according to their proper roles, of the celebrant and all the participants in the Mass with Christ. (PMR 219)

The reference to "proper roles" is particularly disturbing. It strongly implies categorisation of the people of God and certainly it can be interpreted as a statement in favour of hierarchy. The Pope is at the top, his cardinals come next, the archbishops and bishops follow with the priests just below them and finally we have the laity. Laymen do not have much of a say in the running of the Church but at least the choice is there if they wish to give up all to follow Christ. Women may also give up all but they can never quite follow Christ in the same way and they will never get beyond the first rung on the Catholic ladder. However, the NCCB make some concessions, which to date, do not seem to have been investigated. They recommend that the question of admission of women to the diaconal office be considered. They point out that this question was neither addressed nor resolved by *Inter Insigniores* except to say that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith encourages study of scriptural and traditional texts which might throw some light on this matter. (PMR 219)

The question of women's roles in other areas of ministry are delineated and some fault is found with Church teaching especially where women are not allowed to preach the Gospel or serve at the altar. The NCCB say that "(these) instances of exclusion seem to stand in contradiction to our call for women's more direct involvement in the life of the church". (PMR 220) In turn they recommend that women take part in all liturgical ministries which do not require ordination. Furthermore, the NCCB notes that the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*³⁰ has eliminated a number of restrictions that had already been placed on women in the tradition and has provided a number of new opportunities.³¹ By way of compensation the NCCB speaks out against the discriminatory systems and structures within the Church that have caused women such profound suffering. (PMR 224) Included in the criticism is the knowledge that clericalism in pastoral ministry has often been expressed in patronising attitudes which is no longer acceptable. The intention on the part of the NCCB is to see to it that women are, therefore, ensured of empowerment in the Church by giving them positions of authority and leadership in the life of the Church. These actions again, of course, are recommended provided they take place outside of the ordained ministry. (PMR 225)

A sample of the scope that is given to women includes the participation of women as readers in the various liturgies, ministers of the Eucharist, members of parish councils, team ministry, marriage and family counsellors, catechists, spiritual directors, scholars and educators. (PMR 226) In addition, women are included in Episcopal commissions as consultants, advisers and take part in decision-making and policy-setting processes. In order to afford women roles in these and in other areas of diocesan departments dioceses are encouraged to provide more scholarships and

³⁰ The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, *The Code of Canon Law*, Collins, 1983.

³¹ *Ibid.*, par. 129.2, p. 20; par. 230.2-3, p. 38; par. 1412.2, p. 251.

financing that they might be better qualified to serve the Church in its many fields.
(PMR 226)

"One in Christ Jesus"

The NCCB also produced two more draft documents along the same lines updating and revising what had been written in the first. The second paper is entitled "One in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Response to the Concerns of Women for Church and Society".³² (Hereafter OCJ). It is a shorter document and a little advanced on the first so a few brief points will be necessary. People who wished to respond to the second draft were encouraged to do so through their local bishops. What is positive in this document is that it goes beyond the first in its attempt to explicate the sin of sexism. While it reiterates what was said in the first document about sexism it goes into greater detail in its understanding of the sin. It recognises that the "corrosive power of the sin of sexism has seeped into the fabric of our civilization, invading economic and government systems as well as social and ecclesiastical structures". (OCJ 34)

Certainly the most encouraging element of the draft is the bishop's public acknowledgement of the validity of the issues raised by women. The document states explicitly that it feels "...a sense of urgency to do whatever must be done to show that we take women's concerns seriously". (OCJ 170) Here, not only is sexism named as a sin and many of the details examined but the Church's implication in the perpetuation of the sin is significant. The document, thus, admits that the Church must change in its relationship to women when it says that "(for) too long we have stumbled in a blindness that has kept us from recognizing the evil of sexism affecting our lives, our relationships, our social and ecclesiastical structures". (OCJ 42) In addition, it goes on

³² NCCB, "One in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Response to the Concerns of Women for Church and Society", *Origins* 19/44 (1990), pp. 718-740.

to say that "(sexism) is not simply a passing aberration; it affects personally and structurally the way we live together in society and the church". (OCJ 169) More significantly, the document is explicit about the changes that need to be made:

Women's plea for justice is not a passing complaint, but a clear mandate for the church. We must undertake an examination of practices, possessions, power structures and lifestyles found within our own house that prevent the proper advancement of women. (OCJ 153)

With regard to birth control (OCJ 73) and the other contentious teachings of the Church the official stance remains constant. The ordination argument also remains the same. Despite the responsiveness and good will throughout the document the second draft does not really go very far in the important issues. Perhaps one reason for this is that out of 56 of the 141 footnotes cited the dominant voice of Pope John Paul II comes through. What this clearly illustrates is the current untenable position of the institutional Church when it tries to respond to the women's question. The Pope symbolises the patriarchal and hierarchical structure of the Church and in this respect the bishops appear quite powerless to make any significant changes.

"Called to be One in Christ Jesus"

The third draft is entitled "Called to Be One in Christ Jesus".³³ (Hereafter COCJ). Nobody expects that three drafts of any Church document could break down the barriers of hundreds of years. However, there is a certain sense of *deja vu* in the fact that the NCCB has tried so hard to change the existing structures and seems powerless to do so. There was a time when the bishops were seen as immutable men who jealously upheld the hierarchical structure of the institutional Church but these documents would show more than just a paternalistic willingness to listen. There is a

³³ NCCB, "Called to be One in Christ Jesus", *Origins* 21/46 (1992), pp. 763-775.

sadness and a poignancy about the entire effort of the Conference at this stage but even yet they hold out hope. As the third draft itself states:

The process of growth is painful but in the end it becomes a blessing. History attests that it is a more fruitful and a more Christian exercise to examine, to debate, to invite and to persuade than it is to declare and stand by a position that has not been exposed to honest and thoughtful scrutiny...limited though our endeavours may be, we are confident that with all of our sisters and brothers in Christ we shall reach in time the clarity of mind and conversion of heart to which Jesus continually calls us. Our confidence rests not on human efforts but on the grace of God and on the one who is the supreme revelation of God's love. (COCJ 4, 5).

Perhaps what is most significant of all is that in this document the paternalistic and patronising approach is all but gone. In its place is a genuine reaching out on the part of the bishops to learn. Even with respect to the difficult issue of women-priests although *Inter Insigniores* is still the starting point now the bishops state that the Pastoral Letter is not the place for such a complex matter. (COCJ 109) It could be argued that the bishops are avoiding the ordination question. Perhaps they are but they are no longer trying to justify what is to be found in *Inter Insigniores*. Another significant point is to be made in the fact that Church documents in the past often cried out against injustices in society. This document now applies its criticism against injustices within its own society, the Church. For it says:

Undoubtedly, what we advocate for public institutions must be effected in our own. To remain credible as teachers of social justice, we must face the issue of justice within the church. The 1971 Synod of Bishops declared, "Anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes". We, must, therefore, undertake an examination of practices, possessions, power structures and lifestyles found within our own house to see if they prevent the proper advancement of women. (COCJ 57)

The above is a major concession on the part of the bishops. They are pointing to the fact that there must be a change in the power structure of the Church. None of the major issues have been dealt with but many of the hierarchy's attitudes have been toned down. Their willingness to cooperate and look at their own structure is probably

the most promising. However, at the time of writing there is now another set-back already referred to at the beginning of this major section above. Unfortunately, the American bishops have become seriously divided on the women's issue. A new fourth draft has failed to achieve the two-thirds majority required for formal official publication. No further attempts will be made to resurrect the document as a comprehensive letter. Although parts of it will be sent to various committees of the NCCB for further discussion and action.³⁴

This letter is the first ever to have been defeated on the floor of the Conference itself. The main difficulty was Rome. As each draft became more acceptable to Rome it became less acceptable for those who clamoured for change. Opposition to the fourth draft was particularly unacceptable to women most involved in the Church. These included theologians, religious educators and parish workers. Hundreds of letters of petition were sent to the bishops telling of its unacceptability. The difficulty is voiced by one Jesuit reporter in the following way:

By the time the bishops arrived in Washington, the draft had taken on symbolic meaning. For one side, a vote for the letter would be a vote to support church teaching, and a vote against the letter would be a sign of disloyalty to Rome. For the other side, a vote for the letter would be a slap in the face of the U.S. Catholic women and a vote against the letter would signal the bishops' willingness to listen to women.³⁵

The root of the problem, once again, included those contentious issues of the ordination of women, birth control and certain areas of sexual ethics. It seemed that the work of the committee had now become little other than a referendum campaign with an outcome which guaranteed suppression of the dissentient voices.³⁶ What is all

³⁴ For a report of the fourth draft of the unpublished pastoral letter see T. Reese, "Women's Pastoral Fails", *America* 167/18 (1992), pp. 443-444.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 444. Other areas besides the women's question were also on the agenda. These included a revised programme for clerical formation, a letter on stewardship and a plan for

too obvious is that even if the bishops had found the overall two thirds majority required to pass the women's pastoral their authority would always remain subservient to the Pope and the wishes of their superiors in Rome. Nine years of hard work and good intentions has paled leaving an important agenda almost back where it began. That is, at the level of boardroom discussion. Needless to say none of this went unnoticed at the Vatican. It is time now to take a look at the Pope's own document on women whose official word is seldom seriously questioned in the hierarchical world of the Catholic Church. John Paul II's Apostolic Letter was written in between the first and the second drafts of the NCCB documents.

Mulieris Dignitatem

*Mulieris Dignitatem*³⁷ is a rather lengthy document of well over one hundred pages. (Hereafter MD) Therein is contained the usual teaching of the Church in relation to the ordination of women. It has not advanced on *Inter Insigniores* and it did not go as far as the latest NCCB document. (MD 26) However, there are some very positive statements in relation to the Church and women. The Pope refers to the anthropomorphism of biblical language and its limitations in referring to God as male (MD 8); he points to the fact that Jesus spent much time talking to women in an age when this was frowned upon (MD 12); women were the first witnesses of the Resurrection (MD 16) and he views freely chosen virginity as a way in which women can exercise autonomy over their own lives. (MD 17) There are many more positive statements but the area which is of consequence here is in the Pope's understanding of

evangelisation at a national level. However, one area, which was not on the public agenda, received a considerable amount of media attention. This was an issue of sexual misconduct by priests. A small number of alleged victims of such abuse picketed the hotel where the conference was being held. They asked the bishops to take heed of their grievances and called for a response. In response the bishops approved a resolution which expressed their profound concern.

³⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, CTS, 1988.

sexism. The complexity of the question and the Pope's mindset on the matter will now be briefly outlined.

John Paul II speaks of the relationship between men and women as a matter of equality, difference and partnership. A brief reading of his Letter will show that he treats men and women as *equals but different*. Yet, it is this difference within equality that is the major concern. There is a hidden bias of unacceptable dualism coming through the Letter. The Letter argues that masculinity and femininity each have distinct characteristics given to them by the Creator. In order to clarify the distinction the Letter immediately plunges into the business of *roles* and the part played by women. As always, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, Mother of God is the role model. Principally, what comes across is that the essence of womanhood is motherhood. John Paul explains that:

Motherhood as a *human* fact and phenomenon, is fully explained on the basis of the truth about the person. Motherhood *is linked to the personal structure of the woman and to the personal dimension of the gift*: "I have brought a man into being with the help of the Lord" (Gen 4:1). The Creator grants the parents the gift of a child. On the woman's part, this fact is linked in a special way to "a sincere gift of self". Mary's words at the Annunciation - "Let it be to me according to your word" - signify the woman's readiness to accept a new life. (MD 18)

One must ask if the Blessed Virgin Mary's motherhood sums up the vocation of womanhood.³⁸ The motherhood categorisation implies that women are thought of primarily in terms of sexual roles. If this is the case it is hard to imagine women participating in society as thinkers, inventors, initiators or leaders. It would appear that sexual differentiation of roles could constitute discrimination of which *Mulieris Dignitatem* might be guilty.

³⁸ Kari Borresen has serious reservations about the 'divine' motherhood of Mary being taken as a fundamental principle. Along with the titles of mediatrix and co-Redeemer she refers to the divine motherhood as "salvation gynaecology". K. Borresen, "Mary in Catholic Theology", Conc 168 (1983), p. 50.

In 1975 the Board of Directors of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) was asked to explore the theological dimensions of the status of women in the Church and society.³⁹ One of its tasks was to find out whether or not differentiation of roles on the basis of sex might constitute unjust discrimination against women. If differentiation did not constitute discrimination then women's rights were not violated. If, on the other hand, sexual differentiation was unjustly discriminatory then it did, indeed, entail violation of rights.⁴⁰

The arguments are intricate and involved but basically the CTSA's findings resulted in the distinction made between a *dual* and a *single* anthropology. They used the problem of women's ordination as a case in point. The CTSA claimed the argument's against women's ordination generally presupposed a dual anthropology while arguments in favour generally presupposed a single anthropology.⁴¹ It is important to point out here that assertions of the inferiority of women are no longer found in ecclesiastical documents. Unfortunately, however, the problem is a more subtle one since it involves a certain kind of *complementary duality*. In this view a dual anthropology entails a concept of God/Jesus cast solely in male terms. This emphasises characteristics traditionally associated with the *masculine*. The traditionally feminine attributes are given a lesser place in the Church's scheme of things. Here Mary, the Mother of Jesus is the ideal female exemplar.⁴²

³⁹ Catholic Theological Society of America, "Research Team on Women in Church and Society", CTSA, 1978, pp. 1-51.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴² *Ibid.*

The Church's theological anthropology which consists of the *different but equal* or complementary status of men and women is the real issue. The CTSA point out that complementary duality is considered, by those who uphold it, to be inherent in human nature. It is part of the created order and divine plan and is the ordering principle for complementary activities, functions and roles of men and women. This divine ordering of the natures and functions of men and women finds its basis in the biological complementarity of the sexes. In this anthropology an analogy is made between nature and the divine plan. This is highlighted, for example, in the marriage symbolism between Christ and the Bridegroom and his bride the Church. Indicated here are specific roles of giving and receiving. The male in the ordained ministry is the natural representative of Christ. The female is the appropriate symbol of the receptive Church.⁴³

This dual anthropology places an emphasis on the unchanging and static structures of nature to the extent that evidence from the human sciences, history, biology, psychology and sociology are basically irrelevant to ecclesial discussion. Such is the case since the aim of ecclesial discussion is ordered towards nature and creation as found in revelation, thus:

The emphasis is on biological dualism, complementarity of the sexes in roles in the church and its ministry, the divine plan, the created order, the irrelevance of the human sciences to theological discussion, and strong reliance on the data of the past in scripture and tradition.⁴⁴

Mulieris Dignitatem is primarily scriptural and maintains the traditional *status quo*. The biblical texts to which the Pope returns time and again are Genesis 1-3, Luke 1, Matthew 19:22-32 and Ephesians 5:22-32. The traditional understanding is based on five important ideas that recur frequently: 1) the beginning, (e.g. "image and

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

likeness". the "woman" of Genesis 3:15 and Mary as the "new beginning"); 2) man and woman are equally persons because God created them in his own image and likeness; 3) true self-fulfillment consists in the sincere gift of self to the other person; 4) unity of the two, (i.e. the two are different but equal, complement each other and together form a "communion of persons"); 5) spousal love (which means mutual subjugation).⁴⁵

By and large these are commendable and acceptable principles except for number 4) which revolves around the problem of dual anthropology and it is also out of line with Christian feminist thinking. A *single* anthropology, on the other hand, is closer to Christian feminist beliefs. The CTSA points out that while a *single* anthropology recognises *sexual differences* the emphasis is placed on unity rather than duality. Here there are no pre-ordained roles or functions for either men or women beyond the purely biological. On the other hand, what is of importance is not so much the physical characteristics but the spiritual and personal characteristics of the individual. Furthermore, either sex can and should develop those qualities traditionally associated with the other.⁴⁶

The emphasis in this point of view is placed on history and individual experience rather than on nature. History with its changing patterns of human agency leaves room for new insights into revelation, tradition and theology. These in turn contribute to the achievement of justice, equality and responsibility in the life and structure of the Church. Although the *single* anthropology approach tends to be criticised for its 1) neglect of the significance of biological difference and 2) the powerful impact of

⁴⁵ K. Baker, "A Theology of Woman", HPR LXXX IX/6 (1989), p. 80.

⁴⁶ Catholic Theological Society of America, "Research Team on Women in Church and Society", CTSA, 1978, p. 37.

centuries of social and cultural conditioning it seems the more sound of the two models as a basis of theological and ecclesial argument.⁴⁷

Given the strong orientation towards complementarity it is possible to see that *Mulieris Dignitatem* lacks the application of the *single* anthropological approach. The Letter justifies its position on complementarity by setting up the traditional arguments. It states that according to Genesis God created the first couple in perfect equality. In addition, even although they have different characteristics their relationship is not patriarchal because each has a duty of service towards the other. (MD 5) Furthermore, the Letter shows its disapproval of patriarchy by saying that it was the result of human sin. This in turn warranted divine punishment in the shape of the Fall. It was here that men and women lost their equality. (MD 10) Here again certain inconsistencies are to be found. The difference between men and women, we are told, does not introduce inequality between them. Nor does it interrupt mutuality or constitute hierarchical subordination. (MD 24, 25, 26) If, according to the Letter, such is the case then one must ask why only masculinity is identified with leadership in the Church. The dualism in the Church constituted by the entire hierarchical structure is all too obvious. Of this the Letter takes no account.

Gregory Baum in a commentary on *Mulieris dignitatem* also notes certain inconsistencies which have dualistic overtones arising from a complementary understanding of humanity. He believes that the Letter should spell out the differences between male and female characteristics. Instead, it only hints at them.⁴⁸ The hints in turn are open to confusion and misunderstanding. While the Letter recognises the *genius* of femininity in every believer, male or female, statements that speak about

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

⁴⁸ G. Baum, "Bulletin: The Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*", Conc 206 (1989), p. 148.

women's equality and ability to direct their own lives are beside others which deny them full participation in Church leadership. In truth, women's different yet complementary role, especially in ministry, can be translated in almost every case as a subordinate role.⁴⁹

However, despite the inconsistencies and the dualistic anthropological complementarity which springs from a long standing tradition the Letter has certain redeeming features. Among these features one might find that some common element exists for the possibility of dialogue between the official Church and Christian feminist theology. The Letter itself, for example, has the style and character simply of a meditation. This is based on the scriptures and the tradition of the Church but is not a dogmatic series of pronouncements. In his own words the Pope says of *Mulieris Dignitatem*:

Cannot the "message" of Christ, contained in the Gospel, which has as its background the whole of Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, say much to the Church and to humanity about the dignity of women and their vocation?...This is precisely what is meant to be the common thread running throughout the present document, which fits into the broader context of the marian year...And it seems to me that the best thing is to give this text the style and character of a meditation. (MD 2)

The very fact that the Letter was written in the form of a meditation rather than as an authoritarian official statement coming from the Vatican may well, then, provide a basis for future dialogue. Gregory Baum has some interesting points to make in this area. He maintains that there are several ways of reading an ecclesiastical text and points out that: firstly "(it) is possible to compare the text with the Church's antecedent teaching and thus focus on the *Novum* of the text."⁵⁰ By focussing on the novum the doctrinal development taking place in the ecclesiastical *magisterium* is

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

⁵⁰ G. Baum, "Bulletin", Conc 206 (1989), p. 144.

brought out. Secondly, he says that "it is also possible to read an ecclesiastical text in order to understand its total meaning and relate this meaning to the ongoing theological debate in the Church".⁵¹

Keeping in mind the difficulties with the dualistic anthropology in the Letter it is possible to see that the Pope is making the effort to understand women's issues in the Church. The *novum* of *Mulieris Dignitatem* is clear in the hermeneutical approach in the reading of the biblical texts. John Paul II's interpretations differ somewhat from those of the early Church Fathers and the Church's traditional teaching in previous times. He discerns *the sign of the times* and then reads scripture to discover if it has anything to say to these signs. According to the Letter, the scriptures confirm that equality which exists between men and women. In Genesis men and women are equally made in God's image where scripture ascribes to God masculine and feminine characteristics. God is father and mother. However, the Pope is careful to remind the reader that all language about God is anthropomorphic and must be understood in a theological way. While there is a certain similarity between God and humanity the dissimilarity is always greater. God's generative power is, therefore, neither masculine nor feminine. It is totally divine. God's fatherhood is free from all masculinity and is not patriarchal. (MD 5, 6, 7)

Taken as a whole what is now to be said of the Pope's Letter and the NCCB documents outlined above? It is clear that there is a genuine concern on the part of the hierarchy to listen to women in the Church. However, it is also clear that the hierarchy is either not prepared or not able to approve changes which would significantly effect the lives and roles of women in the Church. In most respects those changes that have been made are applicable to lay people in general but they do not make any difference

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

to women in particular. (Indeed, this is often the case in other Christian Churches for all are in need of re-organisation to some extent or other). In other words, whatever it is that women are allowed to do in liturgies, church/parish management, education and so forth men are also allowed to do the same. Without doubt the structure is in many ways as unfair to men as it is to women. The only hope that men have of making real changes in the Church is for them to become ordained. Even then most priests are left behind unless they become bishops. Furthermore, the weakness of the bishops themselves is all too evident from their obvious helplessness in relation to the more contentious issues outlined in the NCCB documents.

How soon we can expect the structure to change is impossible to say but what leaves room for hope is the fact that since the Second Vatican Council there has been some kind of slow (progressive?) movement on women's issues. Fifteen to twenty years ago it would have been unheard of that a Pope would have written a document solely for women or that bishops would have sat around a table and entered into dialogue with them on any matter. It goes without saying that there is much to be done in Church dialogue between its hierarchy and its women but the sample documents outlined above show that there are people on both sides prepared to try. There is also a great deal of good will around otherwise many more women would leave the Church than have done to date. Rosemary Ruether has been among the many feminist theologians who entered into dialogue with the hierarchy. Some account of her work will now be necessary in order to find out whether or not the above attempts were totally in vain.

14. Ruether's Liberating Response

Writing back in 1968 Ruether noted in the euphoria of the Second Vatican Council it appeared that the Catholic Church was about to become revolutionised through the channels of its own constituted authority. After centuries of inbred fear and stagnation

a renewal was about to happen which would catapult the Church into dialogue with modern times. Balanced assimilation of the best contemporary thought was to take place but without schism or the breaking of ranks on any side. Unfortunately, as the impact of the Council had the opportunity to develop its calm and optimistic judgements became by no means certain. Ruether points out that the difficulty arose when the power structure was challenged by the noble theories of collegiality. The putting into practice of these theories was quite another matter. To take the Liturgy as one example Ruether says:

We find that it is one thing to outline an inspiring concept of the liturgy as the celebration of community, but quite another to scrutinize the present life of the parish in the light of these ideals.⁵²

As far as Ruether is concerned where the bishops at the Council made their mistake was to play the revolutionary game not aware that the members were all too ready to take them seriously in a time when the mass media began to have an extraordinary effect in society at large. The bishops wrongly assumed that the implications of what they were saying could be worked out at secret high level meetings and then handed down to a subservient and listening faithful. They seemed completely oblivious to the fact that every statement made from the Council was potential news for the waiting media who in turn often interpreted it in the way that only the media can. Nor did the bishops seem to be aware that Catholics all over the world were also capable of personal interpretation and were prepared to do so without the official guidelines of the Council. Consequently, a revolution initiated by a Pope escaped from hierarchical hands revealing a very different picture to the one intended by the authorities.⁵³

⁵² R. Ruether, "Schism and Consciousness in the Church", *Commonweal*, (1968), p. 326.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

By 1973 Ruether believed that the official Church had become once again so intransigent in its centralised power structure that it was driving out the prospective leadership of a new consciousness. Herein there was an implicit death wish on the part of the hierarchy to become a diminished Roman sect rather than go forward into a new Catholicism. No doubt they hoped that they could ride the storm and rid themselves of the dissidents. These men argued that the people could not tolerate further change and that everything must be stabilised in certainties. A gap thus grew between the creative theologians and the institutional Church which had been bridged only momentarily by the Council.⁵⁴

Despite the reversals, however, Ruether believes that the reforms established by the Vatican Council are so embedded in Catholic life that there can be no turning back. Keeping in mind that Ruether is writing in the 'seventies at this stage she points out that the new sense of consciousness released by the Council cannot be expelled to make way for a smaller but unchanged Roman sect. Those who wish to retreat from the conciliar base are now on the defensive. They have become the sect who struggles to refute the consensus. The fact that they happen to be the ones in power is of little use since their power depends on fulfilling the decrees that they promised would take effect. When they betray the spirit of the Council they simply discredit their own authority. In effect the Church has psychologically become a constitutional republic rather than an unconstitutional monarchy. Ruether still maintains at this time that it is important not to lose patience. The critical battle for change has been won but it will need at least another generation before the new consciousness penetrates into the hierarchical structures!⁵⁵

⁵⁴ R. Ruether, "Continuing Reform After Vatican II", TMonth (1973), p. 94.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

A generation later Ruether writes from a different perspective. The Second Vatican Council precipitated a host of expectations of renewal which the present hierarchical leadership has been unwilling or unable to fulfill. With the hindsight of almost twenty years she believes that a pervasive conflict has built up between two different models of ecclesiology. One is the traditional Roman concept of the Church as a hierarchical corporation and the other is the populist view which took its charter from the Council's Constitution on the Church as the Church of the People of God.⁵⁶ The situation has not yet become schismatic and it is clear that Ruether would be unhappy with such a situation if it came into effect. In this respect the writing of Ruether has always remained constant. As Ruether says:

Institutional churches typically offer two alternatives, either to conform to their limits or to leave it as isolated individuals. We need to refuse both options. Instead, we need to establish new ground on the outside edge of historical communities, while retaining a base on the inside edge of these communities. In this way one has the freedom for new creativity, while taking over and using institutional resources to develop and communicate these projects. Christian feminists need to find the creative ways to make use of this dialectical strategy of transformation of culture and social structures, refusing to be either isolated or co-opted.⁵⁷

Where Ruether has her greatest difficulty is with the present papacy under John Paul II. The self-enclosed authoritarianism expressed in the dogma of infallibility promulgated in 1870 was the very epitome of a monarchical and hierarchical social system. For a time the Second Vatican Council appeared to promise a change in this self-enclosed dogmatism. However, there is a major assault on the developments of Vatican II by an attempt to reassert a system of power rooted in monarchical infallibilism. This power system does not believe in consultation with any other body lay or cleric. There will be no future for the Church at any level if papal absolutism is

⁵⁶ R. Ruether, "The Place of Women in the Church", *MCath*, p. 261.

⁵⁷ R. Ruether, "Women's Difference and Equal Rights in the Church", *Conc* 6 (1991), p. 17.

not resisted. Church teaching will no longer stand if there is not a consensus of the people.⁵⁸

As far as some of the rest of the hierarchy are concerned Ruether is all too aware of their weaknesses but she is also conscious that they are divided between two sets of loyalties. One is to remain faithful to the teaching of change promised by the Second Vatican Council and the other is to remain faithful to the promise of obedience to apostolic authority. The latter is a promise taken by all clergymen at ordination. Ruether's awareness of the difficulties encountered by the bishops is seen in her response to the NCCB's first and second drafts of the women's Pastoral Letters outlined in the previous section. Her immediate reaction is one of reproach when she says that both these drafts are highly clerical and paternalistic.⁵⁹

Specifically in relation to the first draft Ruether, however, mellows when she says that the bishops tried to modify their claims to authority by modestly referring to their pastoral as a *response* to women's concerns. In addition, Ruether accepts the attempts of the bishops who claim that in no way do they mean to define women or prescribe roles for them either by telling them who they are or what they should do. She believes that the Episcopal authors come across as "desperately sincere"⁶⁰ men who truly desire to say and do the right thing by the women they admit they know so little about. Alas, their efforts are highly constricted by their lack of power.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁹ R. Ruether, "The Place of Women in the Church", *MCath*, p. 264.

⁶⁰ R. Ruether, "Catholic bishops and women's concerns", *ChrCris* 48/8 (1988), p. 176.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

The bishops feel that they cannot question Church teaching on many of its doctrines although they use a spirited language to decry the sin of sexism. In spite of such statements Ruether says that "the bishops have little sense of what sexism is, as a part of a legal, social, political economic, and ideological system".⁶² What is more she says that they have not tried to study its history or how it has shaped the Church itself either institutionally or ideologically. For this reason, the continuing denouncement of the sin of sexism is something of a waste of time. Rather, the bishops denounce sexism as something that deplores personal failures of charity instead of what it really is.⁶³ What is even more significant, according to Ruether, is that the bishops are caught between denouncing the tradition and exercising its teachings as though they were immutable.⁶⁴

It would appear that Ruether's frustration is matched only by that of the bishops in relation to Church structures. She gives voice to her understanding of the frustration in a short article entitled "Meetings, but not of minds".⁶⁵ In her official meetings with bishops she believes that they do not seem to be able to organise and use the power, such as it is, which is bestowed upon them. What keeps the bishops in check is a pervasive culture of paternalism which has them subservient and obedient to the more powerful American bishops in the structure and to the Vatican. There have been times when she and other feminist theologians have tried to point out to the bishops that they were as much part of the patriarchal power structure as women and others. Perhaps they as bishops were even more controlled by it.⁶⁶

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ R. Ruether, "Meetings but not of minds", NCR, (1985), p. 13.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

What is even more disturbing is that no matter what the bishops think of the structure privately they will not be prevailed upon to speak up publicly if they differ from the party line. Their commitment to their public role is higher than their commitment to their own personal understanding. In this respect Ruether becomes suspicious about "the truncated moral and intellectual development of men in hierarchical positions".⁶⁷ Such men are being asked to go from being sons to fathers without ever becoming autonomous human beings. In this situation, then, it is not possible to talk about such things as the rights of conscience because the bishops have not been allowed to develop an autonomous conscience of their own. All that they are allowed is an unquestioning obedience to the institutional authority. Anything outside of this is inconceivable.⁶⁸

There can be little doubt that Ruether's understanding of the situation between the bishops and the upper echelons of the hierarchy is correct. There is something of a deadlock between those within the Church who forge for change and those who are willing to change but they are unable because of the hierarchical and institutional system. Quite clearly Ruether sees that there is a genuine effort on the part of the lower echelons of the hierarchy to change the structure of which they themselves are victims. It is very possible that many in the upper echelons also want to change but the age old system does not have an open forum within which to work. The pros and cons could be fought well into the next century but there might be little other than the waxing and waning of the last twenty five years with progression and regression vying for power at one and the same time.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Ostensibly, then, given the preceding discussion, it would appear that despite certain advances made on the part of the Church there is something of a deadlock. In non-Marian documentation the Church has come as far as it is capable at the moment. On the other hand, however, there is little point in dwelling simply on the official dialogues if there is not some attempt made to find other areas of common ground in the theological beliefs of both sides. In Ruether's work both non-Marian and Marian it is possible to find two types of theology which would be of consequence to the debate. These revolve around her understanding of human freedom and liberation. One centres on her liberation theology and the other is to be found in her liberation Marian theology. The former will be outlined directly below in order to show Ruether's thought on this matter and how it connects with official Church teaching. The latter, which is of greater significance for this thesis, will be taken in its place in the final chapter.

The Reign of God

Ruether's writings on liberation are of the essence in such a context since the first task of doing any theology is commitment to the achievement of a salvation which includes a true liberation in society at large. It is also important to note here that there are certain official theological themes which are consistent with that of Ruether's.⁶⁹ Reference to some of these themes will now be made. The most significant is a proper understanding of the Reign of God. The institutional Church must become aware that the Reign of God does not belong within the confines of its ecclesiastical and hierarchical encasement. It might, therefore, begin its conversion by concentrating on restoring the Reign of God to the centre of the Christian message. The importance of the Reign of God and its relationship to the institutional Church cannot be overstated.

⁶⁹ See, for example, CDF, *Libertatis Nuntius*, CTS, 1984 and CDF, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, CTS, 1986.

All that Jesus does and says is inspired by his personal commitment to the coming of the Reign of God into the world. The Irish liberation theologian Dermot Lane, for example, claims that:

Even a passing acquaintance with the gospels reveals the prominence of the Kingdom in the life of Jesus. Most of the parables are stories about the Kingdom in one form or another and nearly all the miracles are signs of the coming of the Kingdom into the world. On a purely statistical level we find the Reign of God/heaven...occurs well over a hundred times in the synoptic gospels whereas explicit reference to the Church appears only in two passages in the synoptics.⁷⁰

It is clear that Ruether is of the same mind in her claim that "the church must be understood in relation to the kingdom..."⁷¹ The primary difficulty here, however, is that Lane's/Ruether's vision of the *Kingdom* and those of the institutional Church's are not necessarily the same. Lane's statistical reference shows his awareness of a strong distinction between the two with the implication that the institutional Church must conform to Christ's teaching on the *Kingdom*. Ruether's quotation implies that there must be a change of heart on the part of the institutional Church if the Reign of God is to come into effect properly. The Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) Joseph Ratzinger would have us believe that only the popes would know what is best for the temporal and spiritual good of its members. At the end of the CDF's instruction on certain aspects of the theology of liberation Ratzinger reminds the faithful of their proper place when he says that Paul VI in his *Profession of Faith* expresses "...with full clarity the faith of the Church, from which one cannot deviate without provoking, besides spiritual disaster, new miseries and new types of slavery".⁷²

⁷⁰ D. Lane, *Christ at the Centre*, p. 11.

⁷¹ R. Ruether, *To Change the World*, p. 21.

⁷² Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Nuntius*, p. 35.

The problem, of course, is based on the question of authority and is outside the purview of this thesis. However, it would be unwise to ignore completely the problem of authority which is at the very kernel of the patriarchal and hierarchal structure. The CDF, for example, welcomes the relatively new communitarian understanding of Church as expressed in Basic Christian Communities but with one proviso. That is, they are acceptable within the institutional Church on condition that they display "fidelity to the teaching of the Magisterium, to the hierarchical order of the Church and to the sacramental life".⁷³ Statements such as these coming from the Church are always the stumbling block but just as it is unwise to ignore them it is also unwise to dwell too much on them. At times it is better to concentrate on areas of similarity and the one in question at the moment is the Reign of God.

Ruether explains that the Reign of God means the overcoming of every evil that exists and the wiping away of every tear. It implies that one cannot divorce social and physical evils, such as poverty, lameness, blindness and diseases from spiritual evils such as the rejection of God and loss of the soul. The social and the material are not unimportant or inferior to the spiritual the two must be seen in conjunction with one another. In this respect Ruether reasons that "to see that the world is full of outcast and afflicted people is to see that the world is at present in bondage to the Prince of Darkness".⁷⁴ One finds a parallel statement in the CDF documents where they say that:

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and a force for liberation...Liberation is first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin...As a logical consequence, it calls for freedom from many different kinds of slavery in the cultural, economic, social and

⁷³ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, par. 69, p. 41.

⁷⁴ R. Ruether, *To Change the World*, p. 21.

political spheres, all of which derive ultimately from sin, and so often prevent people from living in a manner befitting their dignity.⁷⁵

This is also reminiscent of another aspect of Ruether's liberation theological writings concerning the relationship between the spiritual and the physical tenets of Christian faith. Somewhat surprisingly Daphne Hampson criticises Ruether for being remiss in this matter when she claims that "one is hard pressed to see how hers is a theology, as opposed to simply a political agenda for the liberation of people".⁷⁶ Given Ruether's comprehensive works in theology and christology the statement is quite inaccurate.⁷⁷ It would be closer to the truth to say that while Ruether does not *specifically* concern herself with the fear that the spiritual will be lost the Church, on the other hand, warns against choosing in favour of alleviating physical evils over spiritual evils as though the two were a thing apart. This is clear from Archbishop Desmond Connell's statement delivered at a Synod of Bishops in Rome. He says that "(the) Church's preferential option for the poor must never become an obstacle to the service of those who live in spiritual poverty".⁷⁸ His statement is in line with the teaching of the CDF in this respect.⁷⁹

Alternatively it could be deduced that Ruether proposes a combination of both the spiritual and the material at one and the same time. If the spiritual and the material are not kept together the old body/soul dualism which she so reacts against will creep back into post-Vatican II theology. Lane puts this same idea well when he says that the "Reign of God is ultimately about re-establishing right relationships between God

⁷⁵ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Nuntius*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ D. Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, p. 29.

⁷⁷ See, for example, R. Ruether, "The Conflict of Political Theologies in the Church: Does God Take Sides in Class Struggle?", *CaseStud*, pp. 18-31 and R. Ruether, "The Person and Work of Christ: Contemporary Understanding and Applications", *ChurStrug*, pp. 16-29.

⁷⁸ Cited in "The Irish Times", 5th October, 1990, p. 4.

⁷⁹ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Nuntius*, pars. 17-18, p. 34.

and humanity, between humanity and the individual, between humanity and the whole of creation".⁸⁰ Ruether's theology reflects this understanding since it seeks to overcome dualisms which have been traditional in Christian thought. These include the unnatural dichotomy between faith and life, work and contemplation, prayer and struggle, creation and salvation. It is important to Ruether that we follow Christ by living our lives in the context of the social conflicts of our times. The Reign of God, then, is not only *this worldly* but something that begins and ends with God. While it contains a profound continuity with human experience it also represents in the words of Lane "a radical discontinuity with the limitations of a world which has been tainted with sin and death...".⁸¹

In this latter respect the institutional Church needs to own up to its fair share of the blame. As Ruether's stark reminder claims the Church continued to betray Christ over the centuries when it used his name to establish a "new kingdom of domination to rear up the new classes of princes and priests to justify the subjugation of women, slaves and poor...".⁸² The truth of such a statement is not to be forgotten but today in its official documentation, at least, the Church has set out a series of aspirations which would show its intention to make amends for the past. For example, the CDF says:

The powerful and almost irresistible aspiration that people have for *liberation* constitutes one of the principal *signs of the times* which the Church has to examine and interpret in the light of the Gospel...The interpretation of the *signs of the times in the light of the Gospel* requires, then, that we examine the meaning of this deep yearning of people for justice, but also that we study with critical discernment the theoretical and practical expressions which this aspiration has taken on.⁸³

⁸⁰ D. Lane, *Christ at the Centre*, p. 21.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² R. Ruether, *Disputed Questions: On Being a Christian*, p. 99.

⁸³ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Nuntius*, pars. 1-9, pp. 5-6; pars. 1-4, p. 7.

Needless, to say, however, the CDF seldom makes such fine sounding statements without due explanation. In a warning against a too materially based understanding of liberation theology the CDF says:

It is because of her awareness of this deadly ambiguity that through her Magisterium the Church has raised her voice over the centuries to warn against aberrations that could easily bring enthusiasm for liberation to a bitter disillusionment. She has often been misunderstood in so doing...It is in the name of the truth about man, created in the image of God, that the Church has intervened. Yet she is accused of thereby setting herself up as an obstacle on the path to liberation. Her hierarchical constitution is said to be opposed to equality, her Magisterium to be opposed to freedom of thought.⁸⁴

The CDF, in the name of the Church, then, sees itself as a champion of the oppressed albeit from a patriarchal and hierarchical standpoint. Despite the differences the common ground between the official teaching of the Church and Ruether as a Christian feminist theologian is obvious in matters concerning social justice. For both, the Reign of God cannot be understood entirely in *other worldly* terms. By the same token salvation is not accomplished simply by righting unjust social structures. The in-breaking of the Reign of God requires both spiritual and liberating activity. The fusion of both the spiritual and liberating activities has certain implications for the Church on earth. The Church, for example, must stop using the language of finality which it has been wont to use about Jesus. No longer can Jesus be seen as one who has *fulfilled* the hopes of Israel since these were, indeed, hopes for the Reign of God. According to Ruether, the Reign of God "has not been established on earth in any final or unambiguous form, either in the time of Jesus or through the progress of the Christian churches or nations".⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, par. 20, p. 12.

⁸⁵ R. Ruether, *Disputed Questions: On Being a Christian*, p. 97.

Ruether maintains that Jesus himself did not overcome all evil nor did he deliver us from all sin. She believes that speech of this kind mystifies history and betrays Jesus to the extent that it blinds us to the concrete realities of good and evil in human life. While the Reign of God was present in Jesus' time in his liberating acts of healing and love it was also absent. Jesus broke Satan's power but he did not destroy it. Jesus' own disciples misunderstood and betrayed him. The Roman soldiers crucified him. The disbelieving powers and principalities of the day were still in control at the time of his death. If the Reign of God had been fulfilled on earth during the lifetime of Jesus we would not need the Christian faith of resurrection. Such faith has arisen through our refusal to take the facts of the victory of evil in this world as the last word.⁸⁶ There is hope that with this same faith the patriarchal Church will discover that it must become the Church of Latin America, the Church of women, the Church of the poor, despised and oppressed, and the Church of the victims of the systems of colonisation and dependency.

The socio-political message of the Gospel now becomes evident in the documents of the Church. During the past centuries the Church has been little interested in any real kind of socio-political reform almost always emphasising its belief in the spiritual over the material. According to Ruether, reform always implies conversion or redemption. Thus, social justice must centre on a doctrine of redemptions since redemption is not simply about the individual soul but about humanity in its entirety. This includes humanity's social, spiritual, bodily and historical existence. Or, as Ruether puts it more succinctly "once we come to see that the doctrine of redemption is about the human community in history, its affinity with ideologies of social reform becomes evident".⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

⁸⁷ R. Ruether, *The Radical Kingdom*, p. 2.

One of the most important statements the official Catholic Church has ever made with respect to the integral relationship between the Gospel and the ideologies of social justice was made at the Synod of Bishops in 1971. In its final document *Theology of Justice in the World*,⁸⁸ the Synod declared that:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.⁸⁹

It can be argued that the official Church at least has been open to seeing the need for some kind of political action in favour of social justice.⁹⁰ This openness paves the way for some of the barriers to be broken down between the Church and Christian feminism. If this is the case the Reign of God defines the struggle of humanity from beginning to end including the sacred and the secular. Both of these aspects are found in the two theologies in question. The common ground is to be found in a belief in the Reign of God that comes not only through prayer and spirituality but also by continuous socio-political conflict with the kingdom of evil. If this message is more strenuously taken to task by the Church in the future the Holy Spirit might come to be seen at work not primarily or even simply in ecclesiastical institutions but in the struggle of humanity in society at large.

⁸⁸ Synod of Bishops, *Theology of Justice in the World*, Vatican City, 1971.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹⁰ For a chronological account of official Church teaching on this matter see D. Lane, *Foundations for a Social Theology*, pp. 114-122.

The *Praxis* of Jesus

So far much of what has been said revolves around a theoretical understanding of Ruether's hope for liberation and a corresponding set of values evident in official Church teaching. However, all theoretical aspirations in Christianity must have a practical starting point. Is there a hope for common ground on this matter between the writings of the Church and Ruether? There is and it begins with the everyday practice of the man Jesus. What Jesus practised is to be found in one of the best known statements of the gospels which comes from the words of Jesus himself. Jesus said that "(the) time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (MK 1:15). Ruether's interpretation of this message is evident in her understanding of the relationship between reconciliation with God and the overthrowing of unjust, oppressive relations.⁹¹

The starting point for the transformation of the world is the *praxis*⁹² of the historical Jesus. Ruether maintains that the most basic characteristic of Jesus' actions is that they reveal his preferential option for the oppressed. Using Isaiah 61 and Luke 4, she shows how liberation theology has concluded that the poor and oppressed are God's first concern. God's concern is witnessed in Jesus' deeds of preaching the Good News to the poor, the setting free of prisoners, and healing the sick. God's option for the oppressed demands that the wrong which has been done to them by the social and religious institutions be vindicated. The only hope for the social and religious elites is

⁹¹ R. Ruether, *To Change the World*, p. 11.

⁹² For a detailed account and analysis of the term *praxis* see the work of Dermot Lane below who says, for example, that, "(the) Story of Jesus must be told and re-told in a way that specifically addresses the experiences, individual, social and political of the contemporary situation and overtly animates responsible praxis. This will not happen automatically without some form of critical correlation with and creative insertion into the experiential and social circumstances of the day". D. Lane, *Foundations for a Social Theology*, p. 18. See also pp. 8-9, 13, 15, 56, 64-7 and 125-128.

to renounce their power and join Jesus in his solidarity for the oppressed.⁹³ Ruether also points out that Jesus' own vision of the Reign of God was "this worldly social and political"⁹⁴ rather than eschatological. She bases her belief on the parables and historical sayings attributed to Jesus, especially the Lord's Prayer. The prayer implies that God's Will will be done on earth and that basic human needs will be fulfilled on physical, social and spiritual criteria.⁹⁵

There can be no doubt that Jesus was something of a political figure in his day.⁹⁶

Ruether says of this that:

Recent writings on the historical Jesus are characterized by much closer attention to the political climate of first-century Palestine. It has become increasingly evident that messianic prophecy in first-century Palestine operated as the expression of political opposition both to Roman imperial domination, and to the oppression of the Palestinian poor by the local ruling classes. The meaning of Jesus' messianic announcement, as well as the way it was understood by his contemporaries, must take much more specific account of this historical context.⁹⁷

Jesus' message does not lie in his spiritualisation of the Reign of God, but, rather in the fact that he saw the true fulfillment of its earthly hopes in a more radical way than that of his contemporaries. He did not see the struggle against the injustice and oppression of the Romans as a Holy War. Rather, as Ruether says, his revolutionary ideals caused him to look deeper than the oppression of Israel by Rome to the fundamental roots of oppression itself. The fundamental roots include the usual love

⁹³ R. Ruether, *To Change the World*, p. 20.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁹⁶ It should be noted that liberation theologians such as Jon Sobrino, Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff have been criticised for labelling Jesus as a political activist. For a full account of this opinion see Mary Hunt, *Feminist Liberation Theology: The Development of Method in Construction*, JWomRel, p. 90.

⁹⁷ R. Ruether, *To Change the World*, p. 7.

of prestige, power and wealth that causes people to seek domination over all others. Unless this basic desire for domination is overcome, a successful war of liberation will only replace one kind of domination for another. Jesus, in his own life, became the model of a new concept of leadership based on the service of others.⁹⁸

Accordingly, the *praxis* of Jesus is one which does not just turn the social order upside down. Instead, it aims at a new reality in which hierarchy and dominance are overcome as principles of social relations. The leaders of the religious establishments are poor guides and hypocrites. Those who would become leaders must become servants of everyone. The Jesus of the gospels is now recognised as one who has a certain compatibility with feminism. For in the gospel vision women play an important role in God's new order. It is the women of the marginalised and oppressed who are often the chosen representatives of the lowly. The story at the well takes place with a Samaritan woman. A Syro-Phoenician woman is the prophetess who gets Jesus to concede redemption to the Gentiles. Among the poor it is the widow women who are the most destitute. Among the ritually unclean it is the woman who has the flow of blood and asks healing for herself contrary to the Law. Among the sexually immoral it is the prostitutes who are the greatest sinners.⁹⁹

Ruether points out that all of these women are at the bottom of the social hierarchy and the last, therefore, to be expected to enter into the Reign of God. These are the last who will come first according to Jesus who calls for a renunciation of the ladder of hierarchical relationships. He calls for a liberation from societies which have decided who is to be privileged and who is to be deprived. He protests against the system which claims it has the ability to decide who is to be either in or out of favour

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹⁹ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, p. 136.

with God.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, Jesus shows that he has no time for a system which perpetuates the inferiority of women. His *praxis* shows that he demanded justice for all and in particular he was critical of the patriarchal attitudes used towards women in his day. That he demanded justice is very explicit in the gospels. For example, he ignored custom and included women in his company (Lk 8:1-3), he discussed theology with a Samaritan woman (Jn 4:7-26) and he commissioned women to announce the resurrection to the other disciples (Mt 28:1-10, Lk 24:1-11, Jn 20:1-2).

The outcome of Jesus' *praxis* was an emphasis on the role of service. In Matthew Jesus refers to God in such a way that he overthrows the hierarchical relationship of the rulers over the ruled (Mt 20: 25-28). He insists that no leadership group among his disciples should try to establish itself in a hierarchical relationship to others (Mt 23:1-8). Ruether has it that "if this teaching of Jesus had been maintained the very root of sexism and clerical hierarchicalism in the biblical religion would have been decisively undercut".¹⁰¹ She goes on to say that the Fatherhood of God would not have been seen as establishing male ruling-class power over subjugated groups in the Church or in Christian society. Rather, it would have been an equal Fatherhood that would make all Christians equal.¹⁰²

In addition, Ruether claims that Jesus does not use the image of service to reinforce the idea of women as servants. On the contrary he rebukes Martha who was "distracted by her many tasks" (Lk 10:40). Here, Jesus vindicates women's rights against Jewish law when he calls Martha to join in the theological conversation. Hence, the principles of Christian community are founded on a role transformation

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹⁰¹ R. Ruether, *New Woman New Earth*, p. 65.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

which must take place between men and women, rulers and ruled. The ministry of the Church is not to be modelled on hierarchies of lordship but on the "diakonia of women and servants, while women are freed from exclusive identification with the service role and called to join the circle of disciples as equal members".¹⁰³

Promising Perspectives

It is obvious, then, that from the above outline the Reign of God is not available through a spectator-type spirituality. Since the Reign of God was operative in the life of Jesus Christianity must denounce everything in human society that creates oppression and alienation. In turn it should promote all that makes humankind a community characterised by mutuality, freedom, justice and peace.¹⁰⁴ From Ruether's liberationist perspective this means that the Church must take account of the historical Jesus. It must understand that his actions include revealing his preferential option for the oppressed and women in particular. Finally, the Church must restore to the centre of Christianity that particular understanding of the Reign of God as an earth-oriented society of peace, justice and equality.¹⁰⁵ Only then will it be possible to see, in the words of Dermot Lane, that the "presence of the Reign of God is disclosed principally through the *praxis* of liberation in the lives of women and men".¹⁰⁶ Perhaps most importantly of all the Church must make it clear that the "Reign of God is redemptively co-active and co-present among those who hear and heed the call of Jesus to faith, repentance and new liberating *praxis*".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁴ R. Ruether, *To Change the World*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁵ *ff.* Snyder, *The Christology of Rosemary Radford Ruether*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁶ D. Lane, *Christ at the Centre*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

There is no doubt that Ruether's liberation theology can critique and offer alternatives to institutional Church norms. Since her feminist theology is an aspect of liberation theology it identifies with the importance of the Reign of God and the orientation towards *praxis*. It can help to bring about the Reign of God by inducing a revolution which would promote the best possible social and spiritual arrangements that the world has known so far. This is not to suggest that the Church minus patriarchy would be an utopia nor, indeed, that feminist liberation theology such as Ruether's has all the answers. Rather, if a theology such as Ruether's were incorporated into current Church teaching and practice it would, in the words of Rita Gross "assuage the peculiar sense of inadequacy and frustration women experience by providing coherent explanations of our situation and attractive alternative philosophies".¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, it must be made clear that Ruether's liberation theology and its contribution to the Church is not about placating a few vocal women and the occasional *liberated* man who are looking for some kind of equal opportunities for women in Church circles. Instead, it is about breaking up that very strong dualism which still exists between clerical and lay people. It is about ridding the Church of the idea that only the hierarchical elite is in possession of the truth while the laity are a weak and ignorant flock who must be told what to think and do. Furthermore, it is about ending the oppressive structures of the institutionalised hierarchy who find it so difficult to allow women their rightful place. Perhaps, most importantly of all the institutional Church should remember that the head of the Church is Christ. It is not the *Magisterium*, scripture or tradition. Ruether would say scripture itself has a special place as it is the original written witness to Christ but the Church has only partly appropriated Christ's liberating message.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ R. Gross, "Suffering, Feminist Theory and Images of Goddess", *Anima* 13/1 (1986), p. 41.

¹⁰⁹ R. Ruether, "The Roman Catholic Story", *WS*, p. 376.

The primary consideration must always be the personal experiences of the shared *praxis* community. The community in turn tests the meaning of the gospel for its own life. In the midst of and over all these Christ stands beckoning the communities to overcome every form of oppression and make way for liberation. Liberation will begin to take effect when the institutional Church realises that it does not have the final say in the larger community. It must allow itself to be possessed by a power beyond itself. That is, the power of the Spirit. It can possess the Spirit only by knowing that it will never possess the Spirit. It must let go and trust the Spirit which works just as hard in the oppressed of the world as it does in the institutional Church. Ruether would claim that in this letting go "the Church can retain its continuity with itself only by not clinging to what it has become".¹¹⁰ In letting itself go the institutional Church will become a propagandist and agent of social *praxis* for the Reign of God. Here the institutional Church will be thinking in terms of a dynamic rather than a static relationship between itself and its sisters and brothers in the Church and society at large. When the institutional Church becomes liberated it will in turn become a paradigmatic, liberating agent for others.¹¹¹

The hierarchical Church, however, has not yet come this far due to a marked discrepancy between what it writes authoritatively and what it allows to take place at a practical level. From Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*¹¹² to John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus*¹¹³ the amount of literature that has been produced from the Vatican in that

¹¹⁰ R. Ruether, *The Church Against Itself*, p. 61.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, CTS, 1983. This document is specifically about justice in relation to the world of work. See also the latest document written by the Irish bishops on the same matter. The Irish Episcopal Conference, *Work is the Key*, Veritas, 1992.

¹¹³ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, CTS, 1991.

one hundred years on liberation and justice is extensive. Furthermore, much of it is very radical by institutional Church standards. Practically everything that Ruether has said, outlined in the above synopsis, runs along the same lines as official Church teaching. That is, in relation to the building up of a *praxis* orientated Church based on the life, teaching and works of Jesus. What, therefore, is the problem? The ready answer is to blame the Church authorities for their intransigence in not allowing the people to put into practice what the Church itself so often officially teaches. The preoccupation of the people of the Church at large is to wring our hands in anguish as if the hierarchy had machine-guns to our heads. We are too concerned primarily with theoretical issues about belief and truth and we allow the Church authorities to dictate as if we were incapable of rational or emotional thought.

If the pilgrim people do not attempt to take advantage of some of the highly creative works that have been produced by the Church authorities then the theoretical advances that the official Church has made will continue to have very little impact on our lives. In turn the so-called real world of economics, culture and politics will remain relatively unaffected by the new theological developments of recent years. The Church in Latin America is a classic example of where the institutional Church and the *praxis* orientated Church are of a diverse but unified nature. Here in these countries the people have not been afraid to put the academic teachings of the Church into practice. More importantly the Church authorities do not excommunicate every Latin American Christian who belongs to a Basic Christian Community when he/she adapts official documentation to suit the culture and circumstances in which he/she lives. Yet, in the Northern hemisphere most of us are not even prepared to pick up the social justice leaflets produced by the authorities which are available every Sunday after Services.

In this chapter so far it has become obvious that there are a number of avenues which could be explored by both the Church authorities and Christian feminist theologians within the Church. The liberating aspects found in some of the Church documents and in Ruether's work are a case in point. Despite the major difficulties which revolve around the *Magisterium* and the problem of authority the actual aspirations of Church teaching, especially in areas of social justice with a *praxis* base, offer scope for a way forward. There is enough material in the documents of the Church for the people of the Church to begin a revolutionary process as they are doing, for example, in Latin America. The importance of being aware of the existence of the Church documents in question and the close relationship between these and some of the ideas contained in works such as Ruether's cannot be overstated.

So why has this thesis in its attempt to find a mediation point between official Church teaching and Christian feminism not chosen the content of the above documentation as the possible answer? The first reason, in relation to the NCCB, is that their agenda is unwieldy. There are too many major controversial issues to be handled such as contraception, divorce, abortion and the admission of women to the ministerial priesthood. It is not possible for any one Conference to deal with such complex matters without becoming entrenched in a quagmire of confusion and procrastination. Secondly, the NCCB simply does not have the authority to make the changes in the areas demanded of them by those who call for change since anything of any consequence has to be referred back to Rome. This is not to say that the theologians on both sides of the debate should give up. No doubt there is room for a thesis in this area if one had the patience to follow it through. The greatest strength for such a belief is to be found not so much in the goodwill of the bishops of the NCCB but more in the *praxis* orientated documents of the CDF and the various popes in recent years. These in relation to the similarities found in Ruether's work offer food for thought.

It would be a pity if further research were not to be done in the areas mentioned above. They were dealt with in the above first half of this chapter because of their very important significance to the debate. However, what is of greater consequence here is to find a theological perspective which side-steps the unwieldy problems of the NCCB and the problems with authority. At the same time some way must be found for remaining faithful to the vast liberation theological agenda. This takes us back to Marian theology and the attempt to find a less unwieldy and more acceptable mediation point between the official Church and those women who wish to find a leverage towards liberation from within. To this effect, the method of Marian theology which will be proposed in the next chapter, is to be found in ecclesiatypology. While it could be argued that the official voices of the Church would also denounce this new method they are less likely to find it as controversial or as threatening as any of the other more contentious issues already mentioned. That does not mean that this thesis is about finding the path of least resistance. Rather, it is about a genuine search for true mediation that would seem credible and practicable to both sides. The second part of this chapter will now proceed to outline the history, the background and a possible way forward for such an approach.

____Part Six____

15. Ecclesiatypical Foundations

The very essence of the ecclesiatypical approach finds its foundation in the relationship between Mary and the People of God or the Church. Traditional ecclesiatypology, like other areas in Marian theology includes many ambiguities but if some kind of new method is to emerge then the Church's eclectic ecclesiatypology is the best place to begin. The search now commences for ecclesiatypical themes as they will be defined eventually in this thesis. At present it is enough to say that

anything which reveals Mary's historicity, her humanity, her faith, or her discipleship are at the core of the revised ecclesiatypical approach. From this background Mary will then be shown to be a symbol of liberation for all those struggling in the Church. In particular, from this perspective she will be seen as a guide and more realistic role model for women than the tradition has heretofore permitted. However, such themes will not be developed until the next chapter. In the meantime anything that hints of this given background will be examined in this remaining section. Of particular importance, in relation to these themes, is that of Mary as a type of the Church. In the years since the Second Vatican Council Otto Semmelroth has been the greatest proponent of this way of imaging Mary. More will be said of this very significant title in due course.

In recent times the Council itself refers to the ancient title of Mary as type of the Church. The relevant statement from the Council reads as follows:

By reason of the gift and role of her divine motherhood, by which she is united with her Son, the Redeemer, and with her unique graces and functions, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united to the Church. As St. Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ. For in the mystery of the Church, which is itself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar both of virgin and mother.¹¹⁴

It is obvious that there are both theatypical and ecclesiatypical references in the above quotation. However, the task at present is to focus on what is *DEFENSIBLE* in the Marian tradition in order to find an ecclesiatypical base. The quotation, therefore, is evidence that there is an ecclesiatypical orientation in Church teaching. The background to the theme of Mary as type of the Church and its implications are important if Mary's relationship to the Church is to be properly understood. It is even more important if

¹¹⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, par. 63, pp. 419-420.

women in the Church are to find a soul mate with whom they might identify. The above extract is one of the most significant to come from the teaching authority on the Mary-Church typology. Prior to this excerpts can be weaned from the tradition as far back as the Early Fathers.

Ecclesiastical Basis: The Early Fathers

At this stage, however, some references need to be made concerning Mary and how the early Church recognised her as a fully human being as opposed to some kind of super-human being or quasi-divinity. One of the earliest references to Mary's humanity comes from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians when he says "(but) when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law..." (Gal 4:4). In a time when Paul was unpopular with the followers of syncretistic religion and its goddesses he had to avoid placing a strong emphasis on Mary's virginity. Instead, he focussed on her complete humanity and the paramount importance of her childbirth.¹¹⁵ Otherwise Paul is silent on Mary as are the other earliest Christian writers of Apostolic times. Only one author, Ignatius of Antioch, mentions Mary at around this time (d. 110 c.e.) Again it is in relation to her humanity and its significance for the birth of Christ. Ignatius feared the dangerous Gnostic heresy with its docetic doctrine of Christ. His best defence was to stress the true birth of Jesus from the womb of Mary. Ignatius, therefore, emphasises the reality of Mary's childbirth by saying that "Jesus Christ...who was 'out of' Mary, who was truly born".¹¹⁶

A theme which corresponds to Mary's humanity is that of her susceptibility to suffering. Ephiphanius (d. 403) came up with something new at this stage. That is, he

¹¹⁵ H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 1, pp. 33-34.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

had ideas about her death. He suggests that she may have suffered martyrdom and died violently. Such is his interpretation of the Sword of Simeon prophecy.¹¹⁷ While there is no scriptural evidence for this belief Ephiphanius' idea points to an understanding that Mary was truly human because she was capable of suffering. For Augustine (354-430 c.e.) there is no doubt about Mary's suffering. The sword which pierced her soul was the grief she experienced when she witnessed her Son's death at the foot of the Cross. She was so overlaid by suffering that she dared not presume the Resurrection. Augustine directly relates Mary's suffering to to her as a member of the Church. He makes the point that she is a part of the Church, a holy member, but not yet a member of the whole body. Mary is a member of which the whole Christ is both head and body.¹¹⁸ This teaching was abandoned in the Middle Ages when Mary was assigned a place above the Church as mediatrix between God/Christ and humanity.

The sixth century Syrian poet Jacob of Sarug describes Mary as thoroughly human. Despite the fact that Jacob sees Mary almost as a cosmic figure, a representative of all creation, his description of her sorrow under the cross is as follows:

Many sorrows has your Mother borne for your sake, and all afflictions surrounded her at your crucifixion. How many sorrowing weepings and tears of suffering did not her eyes shed at your funeral...How many terrors did not the Mother of Mercy experience when you were buried and the guards of the sepulchre turned her away, so that she could not approach you.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ See, for example, M. O'Carroll who states that there are many interpretations of this prophecy which has puzzled theologians for centuries. Some thought that it forecast a breakdown in Mary's faith during the Passion. Other interpretations include: the failure of Israel to establish itself unanimously under the protection of Mary; doubt or scandal during the Passion; the last judgement; the sword of the angels at the gates of Paradise; God's Word searching human hearts or simply Mary's maternal sorrow during the Passion. M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 387.

¹¹⁸ H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Vol 1, pp. 96-97.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

Not only was suffering a theme which pointed to the early writers' beliefs in Mary's humanity but there were other human characteristics such as confusion and lack of knowledge on Mary's part about her Son's reason for existence. Although he had no doubts whatsoever about the virginity of Mary, John Chrysostom, in the fourth century, parts company with those of his time when they emphasise Mary as *theotokos*. He uses all possible scriptural references to stress her faults and imperfections. In his exegesis on Matthew 12:46-50 and its parallel in Mark 3:31-5, where Mary and the brothers of Jesus come to visit him, he accuses Mary of unbelief and vainglory. Chrysostom goes further in his exegesis of the Annunciation story where he claims that Mary would have killed herself upon hearing such news had the message not been authenticated.¹²⁰ Such preaching did not trouble Chrysostom's audiences. Despite Chrysostom's belief in Mary's miraculous childbearing, her place in the plan of redemption and as counterpart to Eve, he, nevertheless, saw her as an ordinary woman with typically feminine weaknesses. As such she deserved to be reproved by her Son whenever the occasion might arise. Chrysostom's hope was that if he could make the faithful see how difficult it was for Mary to lead a blameless life as the mother of Jesus then how much more difficult would it be for those who could not lay stake to such a claim.¹²¹

A relationship can now be made between these themes and Mary as type of the Church. In the theology of Ambrose (339-397 c.e.) Mary's motherhood does not only extend to Christ but also to his whole body, the Church. Ambrose is the first Church Father to state this explicitly for he says "(rightly) is she betrothed, yet a virgin, because she is the type of the Church, which is immaculate yet married".¹²² Although

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Ambrose has some theotypical and christatypical elements in his writings he believes that Mary and the Church are inseparable from one another. Her inseparability from the Church comes from her having borne Christ which stands her in special relationship to all Christians. This identification with the Church is identified through her suffering at the cross. In the same way that Mary gives birth to Christ she simultaneously brings forth Christians. Ambrose has it that they were both formed in her womb and while she stands under the cross she actually *is* the Church. His understanding comes from the command of Jesus to John and his mother to behold one another (Jn 19:25-27). Mary is the germ and personification of the Church for she not only conceived Christ but she conceived all who were his own.¹²³

Mary's intimate relationship with the Church was affirmed not only by Ambrose but also by Augustine (354-430 c.e.). He too believes that by giving birth to Christ Mary, in some way, gave birth to the faithful. He says "Mary gave birth to your Head, the Church to you. For she (the Church), too is both mother and virgin; mother through her charity, virgin through the integrity of her faith and piety".¹²⁴ Mary, then, for Augustine is more than just an individual woman she is also a prototype of the Church. Augustine reminds us, however, that Mary is not above the Church even although what was later realised in the Church began with Mary. Furthermore, although Mary is the most eminent member of the Church she is, nonetheless, simply a member.¹²⁵

This relationship between Mary and the Church is also evident in some of the writings in both the Dark and Middle ages. There is no need to embark upon these except to

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

mention a couple of names to make the point that the idea did not die out at any stage even during the periods when the typology was at its height. In the Dark ages the Venerable Bede (d. 735) teaches about the intimate relationship between Mary and the Church which had been proclaimed by Ambrose and Augustine. Bede makes the link between Mary and the Church by stating that both are virginal and both are mothers. He continues the comparison by relating the suffering in the sword of Simeon prophecy to both Mary and the Church as one and the same. Mary suffered during the crucifixion while the Church suffered during its persecutions. Arising from this belief Bede goes on to emphasise Mary's humility presenting her in her earthly rather than her heavenly role. He especially shows her as one who is exemplary for monks and nuns because of her humility and chastity.¹²⁶

In the height of the Middle Ages one more commentator is worthy of mention. That is, Hermann of Tournai (d. after 1147). It appears that he was the first to use the metaphor of Mary as the neck of the Church. This metaphor played an important part in later Marian theology because it stressed Mary's role as mediatrix between heaven and earth. As Hermann of Tournai claims "Our Lady is rightly understood to be the neck of the Church, because she is the mediatrix between God and men".¹²⁷ Hilda Graef points out that the image is obviously taken from Paul's image of Christ as the head and the Church as the body. Mary, the neck, is the connecting link between the two.¹²⁸ While a belief in Mary as the neck of the Church is quite christatypical, it nonetheless, points to *an understanding* of some kind of relationship between Mary and the Church.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

These few references in the above outline intend to do little more than show that there has been a tradition, almost from the beginning of Christianity, which relates Mary in some way or other to the body of the Church. The above accounts, however, are far from satisfactory for a full understanding of the ecclesiatypical approach in that they contain many theatypical and christatypical references. Nonetheless, what is significant is that Mary has always been seen as having a special relationship to the Church in the tradition even although that has not precluded an unacceptable portrayal of her relationship to God and to Christ. What is now in question is to find out if there is a more modern understanding of Mary and her relationship with the Church. One of the great classic scholars in this area is Otto Semmelroth who wrote at the time of the Second Vatican Council. Although his work at this stage is somewhat dated he has something of interest to contribute to the formation of an ecclesiatypical foundation.

Ecclesiatypical Basis: Otto Semmelroth

One of the most significant contributions to an ecclesiological understanding of Marian theology is that made by Otto Semmelroth. His basic principle revolves around Ambrose's tenet that Mary is the type of the Church. The idea is dear to Semmelroth not only because it came from the early days of Christianity but also because, he claims, it belongs to "the innermost and essential substance of Christian reality".¹²⁹ He is astonished that systematic theologians did not pursue Ambrose's doctrine more thoroughly because the idea fulfils the fundamental concern of Marian theology. That is, Marian theology finds its unity and meaningful foundation in Mary as type of the Church.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, p. 26.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

Semmelroth goes on to explain why he returned to one of the earlier Fathers of the Church in search of his type which he refers to as an archetype. He says that while the Church is physically visible she is also remote because even in her visible form we cannot touch her inmost reality. Since the Church is made up of an invisible, spiritual core as well as a visible and tangible one we need a type to personify her and make her present to us. Semmelroth emphasises that he does not wish so much to use Mary as a symbol as to rediscover the Church's characteristic features within Mary. As type of the Church Mary represents its inner-most essence while her personal figuration brings the Church closer to humanity.¹³¹ His account is particularly attractive here because he tries to base his Marian theology on something other than an accumulation of symbols and symbolism. (Although he does not ignore these).¹³² Therefore, the core of Semmelroth's perspective is worth quoting:

The united multiplicity of the Church is contained within her, as in a seed that unfolds in the breadth of time and space just as the title of this book (*Mary Archetype of the Church*) contains the germ of our entire exposition.¹³³

The importance of this statement has certain implications for the ecclesiatypical approach. Firstly, a stronger emphasis is placed on Mary's relationship to the Church than it is to Christ. Secondly, this means that Semmelroth is one theologian who views Mary as being more tangible and accessible to humanity than she had been prior to the Second Vatican Council. One theologian who did not make the changeover at the time of the Council is Cyril Vollert. He criticises a theology which places Mary closer to the Church than to Christ. Vollert reasons that the mystery of Mary finds its explanation only in Christ, the Incarnate Word. She is closer to Christ

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32.

¹³² See Els Maeckelberghe for a solid account of the importance of images and symbols of Mary in popular piety and dogmatic pronouncements. E. Maeckelberghe, *Desperately Seeking Mary: A Feminist Appropriation of a Traditional Religious Symbol*, Kok Pharos, 1991.

¹³³ O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, p. 32.

because it is her maternal relation to Christ that gives her a maternal relation with the Church. Furthermore, her collaboration in building up the Church is a natural consequence of her collaboration with Christ in the redemption of humanity.¹³⁴ While it might seem inconceivable to those who think like Vollert that Mary should be removed from her place beside Christ it is the better approach. Otherwise a return to a descending Mariology will be unavoidable.

At the very outset Semmelroth is at pains to discover the basic Marian principle. That is, the core from which everything else in Marian theology is founded upon. Unlike Vollert Semmelroth maintains that Mary is no longer to be looked on only as the object of special devotion which has always arisen from her divine motherhood. While Semmelroth would not wish to eliminate the importance of Mary's motherhood he, nonetheless, believes that it cannot be the principle from which the rest of Marian theology derives.¹³⁵ His belief is that "one is apt to find facile reasonings which cannot conceal a certain speciousness and superficiality".¹³⁶ Instead, she is to be sought at the very centre of the work of salvation through her position as archetype of the Church. In this approach Semmelroth makes the salient point that the *Ecclesia* is at the centre of God's plan of salvation. It is the *Ecclesia* and not Mary's motherhood which is at the kernel of the economy of salvation in its concrete form.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ C. Vollert, *A Theology of Mary*, p. 46.

¹³⁵ O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, pp. 7-19.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20. The point being made here is that Semmelroth is not dissatisfied with the theology of the Mother of God. He would not tolerate any development which might suggest that Mary's divine maternity would not be to the forefront. However, he believes that a problem arises when two essential mysteries vie with one another to be fundamental principles. By contrasting Mary with Eve Semmelroth claims that God had a definite idea to use Mary for the sanctification of humanity. Here Mary's *fiat* is in direct contrast to Eve's disobedience. It was through her *fiat* that the first stage in Mary's motherhood became realised. Mary's *fiat* and Mary's motherhood, then, become two stages in a process which militate against the very essence of a fundamental principle. A fundamental principle by its nature must remain a unity. It cannot become a duality.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

What, then, has Semmelroth to offer? Firstly, he is a contemporary example of a theologian who believes that we are not in a position to neglect the ecclesiological aspects of that relationship between Mary and the Church which had its root in the early Fathers. Secondly, Semmelroth grounds the basic Mariological principle firmly on an ecclesiological basis as opposed to a theological or a christological one. Thirdly, he makes it clear that Mary's role in salvation is not, of itself, Christ-centred but, instead, *Ecclesia* centred. The significance of such thinking gives testimony to an interpretation of a Church with a human face. If the Church can be personified in some way through Mary then the facelessness of the Institution, as it is normally imaged, becomes less of a problem.

However, there are difficulties with Semmelroth's view. The main one concerns the very term archetype itself. While Semmelroth's attempt to relate Mary to the people of God or the *Ecclesia* is commendable he does so by claiming Mary's role to be archetypal only. Therefore, Mary IS PORTRAYED AS ONE WHO IS A PRE-EXISTING MEMBER OF THE CHURCH THUS SETTING HER APART FROM ALL OTHER members. In this respect Mary is portrayed as the ideal that calls for the forsaking of her true image as a creature of God.

Furthermore, once Semmelroth establishes without doubt that Mary is the archetype of the Church of salvation¹³⁸ he does not wish to leave this basic principle standing in isolation. Here, Semmelroth's work does not come without further difficulties. In his attempt to focus on Mary as archetype of the Church he retains practically all elements of the theatypical and christatypical models. This is seen in such images as the Church as the bride of Christ and Mary's relationship within that.¹³⁹ He also

¹³⁸ See Semmelroth's outline of the tradition in this matter. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-48.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-128.

speaks of Mary as being both virgin and mother at one and the same time and he refers to her receptive causality which implies the feminine stereotype of inactivity in relation to everything important.¹⁴⁰ Other themes from which Mary emerges as archetype include her co-redeemership¹⁴¹ and her mediatorship.¹⁴² It would appear that these theotypical and christatypical themes are ever persistent in both traditional and modern Marian theology. A theology which separates these from ecclesiastical themes is not evident anywhere. Nor is it evident in the latest documents of the official teaching of the Church. Some of this documentation will now be examined in an attempt to show the complexities involved in such a separation. In the process, however, it will become clear that official Church teaching leans towards ecclesiastical typology.

Ecclesiastical Constituents: Paul VI

Since the Second Vatican Council a considerable amount of literature,¹⁴³ written about Mary, has come from the two popes in power since that time.¹⁴⁴ From this literature two official documents, one from each pope, have emerged which are considered to be the most important in Marian theology in the last twenty five years. The first document is an Apostolic Exhortation written by Paul VI, entitled *Marialis*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-80.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 92-100.

¹⁴³ Nearly everything written by the popes in general, whether it be official or personal, is published in the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*. For a sample of the many articles relating to Mary see those written by Paul VI and John Paul II in their pontificates between the years 1973-1991. For example, Paul VI: OR 23/271 (1973), p. 1, OR 14/314 (1974), pp. 1-9, OR 23/375 (1975), pp. 3-4, OR 35/387 (1975), pp. 1-2, OR 16/520 (1978), pp. 3-4. John Paul II: OR 3/564 (1979), pp. 1-9, OR 9/570 (1979), pp. 9-10, OR 26/587 (1979), p. 5, OR 32/645 (1980), p. 4, OR 46/658 (1980), p. 16, OR 52/664 (1980), p. 7, OR 50/714 (1981), pp. 1-2, OR 19/783 (1983), p. 1, OR 23/787 (1983), p. 2, OR 24/788 (1983), pp. 11-12, OR 27/791 (1983), pp. 11-12, OR 29/793 (1983), p. 2, OR 803/93 (1983), pp. 7-11, OR 5/819 (1984), p. 2, OR 42/1060 (1988), p. 3, OR 22/1091 (1989), p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Due to his untimely death John Paul I is not being dealt with here.

Cultus (1974).¹⁴⁵ The second is an Encyclical Letter written by John Paul II, entitled *Mary Mother of the Redeemer (Redemptoris Mater)*.¹⁴⁶ These documents will be taken in order to show that while they both contain strong theotypal and christatypal elements each also contains the basis for a new ecclesiatypal approach to Marian theology.

Marialis Cultus was to be the second turning point for Marian theology in our lifetime. (The Second Vatican Council being the first). The publication of this document by Paul VI in February of 1974 broke the great silence on Mary in the intervening years since the Council. It was welcomed by many who had felt something basic had been lost to the tradition since Church services paid less and less attention to her. There can be no doubt that there was a diminishment in Marian devotion and in theological literature on Mary until the arrival of *Marialis Cultus*. However, it is unlikely that official Church teaching ever meant for this to happen. The Council's document on Mary, for example, was simply an attempt at the right ordering of Marian theology for the practice of the Church. In the words of the Council:

Wherefore this sacred synod, while expounding the doctrine on the Church, in which the divine Redeemer brings about our salvation, intends to set forth painstakingly both the role of the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of the Incarnate Word and the Mystical Body, and the duties of the redeemed towards the Mother of God, who is mother of Christ and mother of men, and most of all those who believe. It does not, however, intend to give a complete doctrine on Mary, nor does it wish to decide those questions which the work of theologians has not yet fully clarified.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, CTS, 1974.

¹⁴⁶ John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, Veritas, 1987.

¹⁴⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, par. 54, p. 414.

Since it was not the task of the Council to set out a complete doctrine on Mary further enquiry into Marian theology was encouraged. The Council was not about the business of diminishing Mary. It simply wished to avoid exaggeration on the one hand and mean-mindedness in her regard on the other hand. This left the way open for further theological debate and research. It was Paul VI who took the lead officially with *Marialis Cultus* (hereafter MC). The purpose of the document was two-fold. Firstly, it explicitly referred to the changed circumstances of contemporary women in employment, the home, politics and social and cultural contexts. The reference to contemporary women is brief making the point that the model of Mary as the perfect disciple is biblically based and offers an attractive portrait for women today. Mary, who hears the Word of God and keeps it, is a woman of active and responsible choice.¹⁴⁸ Secondly, and in far greater detail it provided a conspectus of the Marian content for the revised Liturgy. (MC 2-22)

Paul VI's primary area of focus was not, therefore, doctrinal but liturgical. Significantly, in this respect, his document not only follows but develops both the christatypical and ecclesiatypical themes found in the Vatican Council II's guidelines (including the Council's theatypical elements). The papal document, for its part, is divided into three main sections. Section one deals with devotion to Mary within the context of the Liturgy. Section two deals with the renewal of non-liturgical devotion to Mary¹⁴⁹ and part three develops extensively the two very traditional prayer forms the Angelus and the Rosary. A systematic evaluation of *Marialis Cultus* is not

¹⁴⁸ Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, pp. 7-11.

¹⁴⁹ A distinction needs to be made at this stage between liturgical and devotional practices. The liturgy is a set of official rites prescribed by the Church for the correct order of public worship. Contemporary practice comes from the regulations set down by the Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, Translated in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, pp. 1-280. Devotions, on the other hand, are generally of a private (not necessarily individual) nature and do not have an official set of rites or rules contained within the rubrics.

relevant here but a selection of some of its themes will be made in order to point out its ecclesiatypical elements including its theatypical and christatypical perspectives.

In the task of placing Mary within a proper context for Christian worship the Pope turns his attention to the Liturgy dwelling almost exclusively on the books of the Roman Rite and avoiding the liturgies of the East. First of all there had been a revision of the *General Calendar*¹⁵⁰ as ordered by the Council. It is a calendar of the cycle of feast days to the Persons of the Trinity, Mary and the saints. Its purpose is to see that certain days of the year are selected for the commemoration of the mysteries of the faith. Paul VI cites the following as an example:

...during Advent there are many liturgical references to Mary besides the solemnity of 8 December, which is a joint celebration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, of the basic preparation (cf. Is 11:1, 10) for the coming of the Saviour and of the happy beginning of the Church without spot or wrinkle. Such liturgical references are especially on the days from 17 to 24 December, and more particularly on the Sunday before Christmas, which recalls the ancient prophecies concerning the Virgin Mother and the Messiah and includes readings from the Gospel concerning the imminent birth of Christ and his Precursor. (MC 3)

In taking the Advent period as an exemplar for the whole of the liturgical year it is possible to see the idea behind the Pope's thinking. Firstly, Mary is to be seen as a model for the people of God, the Church. In the Advent period Mary prepared herself in waiting for the coming of the Saviour. In the same way the Church must wait by being vigilant in prayer and praise. The focus of the calendar here is on Jesus and not Mary who waits for him just as the rest of humanity waits. While there is commemoration of the Mother the focus is on Christ. As the Pope says "(this) balance can be taken as a norm for preventing any tendency (as has happened in certain forms

¹⁵⁰ Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar*, Liturgy Training Publications, 1985.

of popular piety) to separate devotion to the Blessed Virgin from its necessary point of reference - Christ". (MC 4)

The Pope's guidelines throughout the liturgical year follow the same vein. Wherever, there is found a feast day to Mary, as in the Immaculate Conception above, the focus is always, first and foremost on Christ. Prior to these guidelines, Mary's Immaculate Conception, taking it again as one of many possible examples, would have been seen as her feast day alone. All subsequent feasts to Mary are a joint commemoration to Mary and her Son but there is no feast where Mary stands alone or even beside Christ. It is interesting to note that in one feast day at least the very title of the feast has been changed. The feast of the Annunciation, celebrated on the 25th March, was always considered to be very much a feast day in commemoration of Mary. It is now no longer known as the Annunciation but the Incarnation of the Word, the focus is, thus, changed from being Mary-centred to being Christ-centred. (MC 6)

A theatypical element, however, is strongly evident. The above quotation elucidates this point. There is an orientation on the part of the Pope, as there is on the part of all those who draw up official Church documents on Mary, to maintain such elements which also contain christatypical ones. With the revised Missal, for example,¹⁵¹ the Pope notes with approval that:

As we examine the texts of the revised Missal we see how the great Marian themes of the Roman prayerbook have been accepted in perfect doctrinal continuity with the past. Thus for example we have the themes of Mary's Immaculate Conception and fullness of grace, the divine Motherhood, the unblemished and fruitful Virginity, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, Mary's cooperation in the work of her Son, her exemplary sanctity, merciful intercession, Assumption into heaven, maternal Queenship and many other themes. (MC 11)

¹⁵¹ Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *The Roman Missal*, Liturgy Training Publications, 1969.

All of these are either theotypal or christatypal. The following statement is the same but the ecclesiastical reference comes shining through. He makes reference to how:

...other themes, in a certain sense new ones, have been introduced in equally perfect harmony with the theological developments of the present day. Thus for example we have the theme of Mary and the Church, which has been inserted into the texts of the Missal in a variety of aspects, a variety that matches the many and varied relations that exist between the Mother of Christ and the Church. For example, in the celebration of the Immaculate Conception such texts recognize the beginning of the Church, the spotless Bride of Christ. In the Assumption they recognize the beginning that has already been made and the image of what for the whole Church, must still come to pass. In the mystery of Mary's Motherhood they confess that she is the Mother of the Head and of the Members - the holy Mother of God and therefore the provident Mother of the Church. (MC 11)

Paul VI makes the further statement that when the Liturgy turns its gaze either to the primitive Church or the Church of the present day it always finds Mary. He reminds his readers that in the early Church Mary is seen praying with the Apostles. In our own day Mary is "actively present, and the Church desires to live the mystery of Christ with her". (MC 11) The Marian commentator Donal Flanagan remarks that the main thrust of the Pope's document is "to emphasize clearly that the liturgical renewal has, indeed, given her full and proper place to Mary in the Church's worship".¹⁵² The papal document, then, is an attempt not to lose Mary as vital to the life of the Church but to place her within the Church as one who is standing beside the people. Suffice it to say that the document also shows the paramount importance of the Liturgy as locus for the Church's veneration of Mary. This places an official limit on those who might, once again, begin to think about claiming Mary as an object of isolated devotion.

Nor are guidelines for private devotion to Mary neglected by Paul VI's document. He writes:

¹⁵² D. Flanagan, "The Veneration of Mary: a New Papal Document", *Fur* 25/5 (1974), p. 273.

Hence it is that the forms in which this devotion is expressed, being subject to the ravages of time, show the need for a renewal that will permit them to substitute elements that are transient, to emphasize the elements that are ever new and to incorporate the doctrinal data obtained from theological reflection. (MC 24)

It is significant that the Pope applies his understanding of devotional renewal to the specific needs of the local Church. While he offers general guidelines he refrains from making universal statements. In other words, Paul VI is conscious of the fact that devotion to Mary in the Catholic Church, for example, in Europe would be very different to the kind of devotion practised in Latin America. He believes that only the local Church can be aware of the very specific needs of its people in this matter. For this reason each Church must draw up its own criteria of devotion. (MC 24) In taking this stance the Pope takes account of the fact that the type of devotion given to Mary in places like Latin America are to be handled sensitively. The responsibility for such a task lies with the local ordinary.

However, the sensitivity of the local ordinary is not to be completely trusted since the Pope goes on to say that popular devotion must never obscure the basic trinitarian shape of the Christian faith and worship. As in the case of Mary and the Liturgy popular devotion must always have Christ as its focal point as "(in) the Virgin Mary everything is relative to Christ and dependent upon him". (MC 25) In addition, a strong ecclesiatypical approach is noticeable in relation to the guidelines for devotional practices. Marian devotion must always recognise the mysterious oneness which exists between Mary and the Church community. As the Pope points out..."love for the Church will become love for Mary, and vice versa, since the one cannot exist without the other...". (MC 28)

Included in the directive are the two traditional practices of the Rosary and the Angelus. Both these types of prayer have always been viewed as specifically Marian.

Now from a doctrinal perspective the Pope changes the concentration from Mary to Christ. He commends both these prayers as valid and useful forms of devotion but his call for a Christ-centred focus to the Rosary is obvious from the following statement:

By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. (MC 47)

Pope Paul concludes his remarks on popular devotion and these two prayers of the people by adding that the Rosary should not be propagated in such a way that is too one-sided or exclusive. He finishes by saying that "(the) Rosary is an excellent prayer but the faithful should feel serenely free in its regard". (MC 55) Perhaps such a statement does not seem to be of major significance but for any Catholic brought up in the *Rosary tradition* it is quite startling. It is a particularly unusual statement in that not ten years before people said the Rosary during the Liturgy of the Tridentine (Latin) Mass and all Catholics were strongly encouraged to use it as the norm for family prayer in the home.

Overall what is to be said of *Marialis Cultus* is that while it does not move forward from the christatypical themes found in the documents of the Second Vatican Council it, nonetheless, remains faithful to those ecclesiatypical themes contained therein. Mary, then, in certain respects is held up as one of the people of God. This contrasts rather starkly with that other-worldly character of the tradition prior to the Vatican Council. *Marialis Cultus* as an official document points rather forcefully to a woman emancipated from the theatypology of an earlier era. A clear line of demarcation is drawn up between that worship which is due to the Son of God and the kind of fond devotion which is officially allowed for the Mother of God incarnate. Mary is now in the process of being given back her full humanity. In the ecclesiatype Mary is seen as

a women among women, no longer to be either idolised or rejected but, as one who can help us to live our Christianity to the full.

Now it has to be decided if an ecclesiatypical propensity has been followed through in the more recent official teaching of the Church. The primary focus here will be based on the last major Marian work to have been published by the present Pope, John Paul 11. In March 1987 he published his Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (hereafter RM). It is at the moment the key official document on how the Church looks on Mary. The Encyclical is the longest document ever to have been written by a pope on the Mother of God incarnate. RM was issued to set the tone for the Marian Year 1987-1988 and served a dual purpose. Firstly, it was intended to be an outline of religious celebrations for that year. Secondly, it was to serve as a detailed survey to explain what the official Church believes about Mary. In his Letter the Pope keeps in mind the situation within which Catholic Christians find themselves today and shows the relevance of Mary for them in the latter part of the twentieth century.¹⁵³

Ecclesiatypical Constituents: John Paul 11

Overall the Letter is ecclesiatypical in tone. The very subtitle reads, "The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church". RM stresses the "singularity and uniqueness of Mary's place in the mystery of Christ" (RM 9) and her "active and exemplary presence in the life of the Church". (RM 1) At the same time it emphasises that Mary cannot take the place of Christ as mediator between God and humanity. It points to the different aspects of her motherhood, the importance of her femininity and her role in the Church's 'option for the poor'. There is also an important passage

¹⁵³ Thomas O'Loughlin explains that the background to the message of the Marian year is significant for the approach of the second millennium. Since Mary preceded the birth of Christ at the beginning of the first millennium we should turn to her as we approach this one. T. O'Loughlin, *Marian Encyclical*, p. 5.

for the ecumenical movement where Mary is described as the helper of Christianity. (RM 33) What is evident at this stage is that the Encyclical has a different purpose to that of *Marialis Cultus* which had been written thirteen years previously. The Encyclical, for its part, is not immediately concerned with the right ordering of devotion to Mary, rather, it is doctrinal.¹⁵⁴

There can be little doubt that John Paul felt that all that had to be said liturgically and devotionally had been covered in *Marialis Cultus*. The following summary statement would suggest that he was satisfied with the official liturgical and devotional teaching of Paul VI:

Shortly after the Council, my great predecessor Paul VI decided to speak further of the Blessed Virgin. In the Encyclical Epistle *Christi Matri* and subsequently in the Apostolic Exhortations *Signum Magnum* and *Marialis Cultus* he expounded the foundations and criteria of the special veneration which the Mother of Christ receives in the Church, as well as the various forms of Marian devotion - liturgical, popular and private - which respond to the spirit of faith. (RM 2)

The way was thus paved for John Paul to focus on the doctrinal formulations of *Redemptoris Mater*. Here the Pope uses two sources for his teaching, the scriptures and the Second Vatican Council's Marian document *Lumen Gentium*. All scriptural references on Mary are availed of and used throughout the Encyclical. (In a document containing fifty two paragraphs forty two of these contain scriptural references). Such abundant use of the scriptures in a theological document makes it unique of its kind. After the scriptures the next most quoted source is *Lumen Gentium*. The Pope is concerned that Catholics come to understand that with *Lumen Gentium* Mary became central to the Church itself. She was no longer a peripheral issue relegated to the margins of an isolated Mariology.

¹⁵⁴ For a development of this idea see, for example, W. McLoughlin, "Popular Marian Devotions Today", *MillStud* 22 (1988), p. 74.

Mary's place, instead, is to be found at the very heart of the Church's understanding of itself. Another important statistic to note is that out of a document containing fifty sections the Pope makes thirty five statements directly relating Mary to the Church.¹⁵⁵ It would be impossible to make references to all of these statements here. Nonetheless, the very quantity guarantees that Church teaching to date contains a strongly rooted ecclesiatypical base. One more significant point is to be found in the very title of the document itself. The title *Redemptoris Mater* from the outset makes it quite clear that Mary is no longer to be seen as co-Redeemer. She is simply the Mother of the Redeemer. John Paul follows up this idea in the body of the text in several ways. One way, for example, is seen in the following statement:

...Mary became not only the "nursing mother" of the Son of Man but also the "associate of unique nobility" of the Messiah and Redeemer. As I have already said, she advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and in this *pilgrimage* to the foot of the Cross there was simultaneously accomplished her maternal *cooperation* with the Saviour's whole mission through her actions and sufferings. (RM 39)

The theme of co-redeemership has been toned down by a theme of associateship or cooperation with the Redeemer. In this way John Paul's writings remain faithful to the teachings of Vatican II. Concerning the parallel title which images *Mary as mediatrix* John Paul again reiterates the teaching of the Council. He begins the third part of *Redemptoris Mater* by saying that "(the) Church knows and teaches with Saint Paul that, *there is only one mediator*". (RM 38) There can be little doubt about the Pope's intentions when one notices that the sub-title to the section simply reads "Mary, the Handmaid of the Lord". Here he quite readily places Mary behind Christ. However, the Pope goes on to say that in Mary's case there was a special and exceptional mediation which was based on her "'fullness of grace', which was expressed in the complete willingness to be the 'handmaid of the Lord'". (RM 39)

¹⁵⁵ I counted thirty five sections containing references to Mary and the Church but the actual instances within each section would be far in excess of thirty five.

Redemptoris Mater, like *Lumen Gentium* and *Marialis Cultus*, however, does not avoid the use of some of the more problematic theatypical or christatypical elements. Here again, they are interspersed with the ecclesiastical ones. Many of the old favourites such as Mary's virginal motherhood (RM 1), her Immaculate Conception (RM 3), her preservation from Original Sin (RM 10), the Eve/Mary analogy (RM 19) and the Assumption (RM 41) are evident. John Paul, therefore, does not deliver a Marian theology very much different to that of his predecessors in the use of many of the traditional symbols. However, his Marian doctrines have a greater ecclesiastical foundation than is to be found in either the sparse guidelines of the Second Vatican Council or the liturgical and devotional guidelines of his predecessor Paul VI.

The Marian theology of John Paul II, nonetheless, is much more perplexing outside of the official doctrinal teaching. At a personal level, in his Marian devotion, the Pope is often christatypical while also betraying a tendency to the theatypical approach. In the official Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, he has written in excess of sixty articles on Mary during the course of his Pontificate.¹⁵⁶ Almost from the beginning of that office John Paul reminds the faithful that the devotion which is to be espoused is that of *hyperdulia*.¹⁵⁷ This is spelt out clearly to a general audience given in January 1979. It follows the old traditional understanding on devotion to Mary as one who is above the angels and saints but beneath Christ.¹⁵⁸ In certain editions of

¹⁵⁶ It is difficult to assess exactly how many articles the Pope wrote on Mary in *L'Osservatore Romano* so prolific are his writings in this area. I counted over seventy articles that he had written from the beginning of his Pontificate until 1991.

¹⁵⁷ Again it might be beneficial to note here that this is the type of devotion which is given especially to Mary. It is higher than that of the devotion due to the saints *dulia* and much lower than that worship *latria* which is due to God alone.

¹⁵⁸ John Paul II, "Uphold Dignity of Motherhood", OR 3/564 (1979), p. 1.

L'Osservatore Romano, he uses an enthusiasm of expression reminiscent of the theatypical. While broadcasting Mass in the Sistine Chapel he exclaims:

Hail Mary...Today I would like to be in Spirit in that corner of France where for a hundred and twenty one years these words have been murmured incessantly by the lips of thousands, of million, of men and women...¹⁵⁹

The statement in itself is a harmless one but where has the Pope enthused about Christ to this extent? In fact, in 1983 in another edition of the same newspaper the Pope goes so far as to say that "Mary is the greatest success of the Pascal Mystery".¹⁶⁰ Of Christ and the Pascal Mystery he says:

...that its most beautiful and most exalting fruit is the glorious triumph of Mary, his mother. She is the most exquisite fruit of the seed of eternal life that God, in Jesus Christ, has sown in the heart of mankind in need of salvation after Adam's sin...In her and with her, who did not pass from sin to grace, as we all did, but who through a singular privilege, in view of the merits of Christ, was preserved from sin, journeying toward the eternal Easter from the very first moment of her existence. Even more than that, her whole life was an "Easter": a passage, a journey in joy: from the joy of hope at the time of trial to the joy of possession after the triumph over death.¹⁶¹

Statements such as the above, although they are of a personal and devotional nature do not synchronise fully with the writings contained in *Redemptoris Mater*. In addition, they are theologically confusing. Surely the greatest success of the Pascal Mystery is Christ himself? By virtue of Christ's place within the Trinity the phrase applied to Mary "the most exquisite fruit of the eternal life of God", would be better applied to Christ. At the very least the entire statement is christatypical in tone and suggests once again that Mary is almost on a par with Christ. Many of the articles on

3. ¹⁵⁹ John Paul II, "The *Magnificat* Answers Questions on Evangelizing", OR 9/570 (1979), p.

p. 2. ¹⁶⁰ John Paul II, "Mary is the Greatest Success of the Pascal Mystery", OR 17/781 (1983),

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Mary in *L'Osservatore Romano* abound with similar sentiments. In one of these articles the Pope's choice of words in relation to Mary and the Eucharist is dubious when he says "(at) the root of the Eucharist is the virginal and maternal life of Mary".¹⁶² One would have thought that Christ was at the root of the Eucharist. What can be directed at the Pope by way of criticism in respect of the above may be that he does not choose his language carefully enough. An abundance of statements of this nature gave rise to the problems in the tradition in the first place.

Is it a fair criticism to claim that the present Pope (with his Marian motto *Totus Tuus*)¹⁶³ is visiting on the Church an excessive piety regarding Mary? Along with his personal consecration to her, the Pope on each of his journeys throughout the world, has entrusted each and every nation to the maternal care of the Virgin. Is it a fair charge against the Pope to say, for example, that he is somehow seeking a reversal of the Council's progress in this matter? As a brief reminder the Council has said:

...it strongly urges theologians and preachers of the word of God to be careful to refrain as much from all false exaggeration as from too summary an attitude in considering the special dignity of the Mother of God. Following the study of Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, the doctors and liturgy of the Church, and under the guidance of the Church's magisterium, let them rightly illustrate the duties and privileges of the Blessed Virgin which always refer to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity, and devotion. Let them carefully refrain from whatever by word or deed lead the separated brethren or any others whatsoever into error about the true doctrine of the Church.¹⁶⁴

It is probably fair to say that the Council's directive against "false exaggeration" is difficult to assess since a number of the questionable privileges bestowed on Mary are

¹⁶² John Paul II, "At the Root of the Eucharist is the Virginal and Maternal Life of Mary", OR 24/788 (1983), p.3.

¹⁶³ As a matter of interest the Irish singer Dana made a record entitled *Totus Tuus* written especially for the occasion of the Pope's visit to Ireland in 1979.

¹⁶⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, par. 67, p. 422.

found in the christatypical themes of the Council itself. Furthermore, it would be incorrect to uphold the argument that the Pope has in any conscious way mislead anyone, "separated brethren" or not, into "error about the true doctrine of the Church". Perhaps the opinion of the English journalist, Peter Hebblethwaite, is worth noting. He interprets the Pope's evident devotion to Mary as something peculiar to the Pope rather than anything of great significance to official Church teaching.¹⁶⁵ While most of what the Pope was saying has been written in an official newspaper coming from the Vatican, *L'Osservatore Romano*, it would not be taken generally as the official teaching of the Church. However, the Pope must guard against what he puts into print even although the contents of *L'Osservatore Roman* would not have the same official standing as encyclicals such as *Redemptoris Mater*.

Besides the Pope's personal opinion on this question it is now time to decide if there is enough data to continue with the basic argument of this thesis. Firstly, it was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter that a certain effort has been made on the part of the hierarchy and Christian feminists to come together so that there might be an awakening of the equal dignity and rights of women within the Church. What took place has been recorded in the documents of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of America. While these records show a high level of good will on all sides the patriarchal and hierarchical structure of the institutional Church frustrated the expectations of most of the participants. At the same time John Paul 11's document *Mulieris Dignitatem*, on the dignity of women took something of that dignity from them in that women were not consulted but were informed about the contents therein. Although some might see this Letter as a step in the right direction it does not move either fast enough or far enough to change the role of women in contemporary times.

¹⁶⁵ P. Hebblethwaite, "The Mariology of Three Popes", *TWay* 51 (1984), pp. 63-67. Hebblethwaite claims that since the Pope lost his mother at an early age and did not have any sisters he looks to the Mother of God Incarnate as a kind of surrogate. This, he says, is compounded by the fact that Poland is a country with a strong Marian devotion.

Rosemary Ruether, for her part, made a challenging response primarily to the first draft of the NCCB's attempt at dialogue. Again, she believes that the institutional structure as it stands will always prevent any true dialogue from taking place because the system is organised in such a way that makes change impossible. However, Ruether's understanding of liberation in general is close to some of the social and theological teachings of the Church which are based on the life and practise of Jesus. In this respect, at least, the Church and Ruether come close to sharing a common vision with the prospect of living out together the important message contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is only too well known, however, that the network of human relationships does not blend too well when the hierarchy and Christian feminists try to work out some of the social and religious implications of Jesus' *praxis* orientated approach. For this reason another avenue must also be explored. The final chapter of this thesis is about the exploration of just such a way. The basis for this hope is to be found in a new model of ecclesiatypology based on Ruether's Marian writings and the hopeful foundations just referred to in the papal documents above. Before that stage commences, however, some brief references must be made to certain other feminist theologians who have also written on Mary. This is with a view to finding out if theatypology and christatypology is used in any significant way in feminist theology itself.

A PLACE IN THE UPPER ROOM

16. Approaching Ecclesiatypology

In order to develop a new and more acceptable Marian theology for women within the Church Rosemary Ruether's ecclesiological approach to Mary will prove a valuable medium. Perhaps it is best to mention again at this stage that the relevant themes in ecclesiatypology consist of ideas which deal with the historical Mary, her struggling faith as an ordinary woman, her discipleship and the tenacity of her liberating strength which is in evidence in the *Magnificat*. (All of these come from a foundation based on her relationship with the Church as opposed specifically to her relationship with Christ which was suggested to some extent by Otto Semmelroth in his archetypal approach). Rosemary Ruether's work, for its part, like official Church teaching deals with these topics to a greater or lesser extent and both would accept the these basic tenets of Marian theology without serious question. When the themes in question are analysed and further developed a new ecclesiatypical model will emerge.

In the meantime it will be necessary to find out how certain other Christian feminist theologians describe their Marian theologies. However, a systematic and specifically theologian orientated approach is not within the purview of this paper. Nor is it possible to focus adequately on the interpretation of their Marian symbolism. The main concern at this stage is simply to show that there are feminist theologians writing on Mary who display theatypical and christatypical themes alongside ecclesiatypical ones. For this reason the present thesis is eclectic in its choice of theologians for the discussion in question of which only three will be selected. These include a brief account of some of the Marian writings of Anne Carr, Kari Borresen

and Maria Kassel. The three authors are important in that Anne Carr has an in depth knowledge of the Marian theology of the Second Vatican Council, Kari Borresen treats of an important title which cannot be ignored, that is, Mary as *Mater Ecclesiae* and Maria Kassel has some relevant comments to make on Mary as an archetype in the light of depth psychology. Like Ruether, they too portray something of a penchant for theatypical and christatypical symbolisms but also like Ruether some aspects of their theologies contain valuable information which help to clarify what the ecclesiatypical approach is and is not about.

Taking the above three mentioned Christian feminist theologians as examples of those who write about Mary's role in the tradition it will be shown that they all tend to do one of two things in their respective Marian theologies. Either they reject the symbols which they see as oppressive or they attempt to reinterpret them from a feminist theological perspective. Therefore, it will be best to begin by searching for the strains of ecclesiatypology and then find out to what extent the theologians who have been chosen as examples make use of the other two models. This approach will offer a wider perspective on how to understand Ruether's ecclesiatypology which is based on the life and faith of the historical Mary and where she fits into the christological and ecclesiological tenets of the tradition. Finally, a new foundation for the ecclesiatypical approach itself will be suggested as a way forward for the liberation not only of women but also of the Church as an Institution.

Anne Carr: A General Perspective

Anne Carr's Marian theology contains all three elements of the theatypical, christatypical and ecclesiatypical models. Her ecclesiatypical orientation is clear from her criticism of certain aspects of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. She rejects its uncritical use of the Eve/Mary symbolism contrasting Eve's disobedience

with Mary's perfect obedience. She is further critical of its language of perfection which has been so easily transferred to the Church and "understood triumphalistically as the perfect society of nineteenth-and early twentieth-century theology".¹

Alternatively Carr also has favourable remarks to pass about the Council's ecclesiological approach to Marian theology and these too are evidence of her ecclesiastical bent. She claims that there is "much to be said for the theological development in the Mary chapter of *Lumen Gentium*"² She is satisfied with the decision to place Mary in the overall context of the Church and with the right ordering of devotion to her in the Liturgy. Carr also notes with approval that Mary's relationship to Christ is put into a better perspective by integrating her into the whole of theology rather than accepting an isolationist Marian approach. What is most significant is that Carr believes women gain particular strength from the Council's scriptural references to Mary portraying her to be a very human figure. This means, for Carr, that Mary struggled with her faith until the end of her life. Only at the end of it did she become a member of the believing community. Mary, here, is the model of the Church who embodies a life of coming to faith, hope and love for the pilgrim Church on earth that is constantly in need of reformation. The retrieval of such a model for today will portray Mary as a true figure of faith and discipleship. Such is a woman who walked in the obscurity and mystery of life.³

There is another important point which gains Carr's approval and that is the one concerning the relationship between Mary and the Church as an Institution. She says that if the treatment of Mary at the Second Vatican Council and its focus on her as model of the Church is pursued then a significant transition in ecclesial self-

¹ A. Carr, *Transforming Grace*, pp. 189-190.

² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

understanding will take place. This transition, which is not by any means complete, will consist of a Church that is attempting to move from an idealised and divinised model of static perfection to a more dynamic earthly model of human struggle from unbelief to faith. The Church can then become a true model for a pilgrim people in solidarity with God and with each other. Translated into feminist terms this means that the acute tension which exists today in the patriarchal, hierarchical model of the Church can be transformed into a more egalitarian, fully inclusive model of Christian discipleship.⁴

Although Carr's Marian theology has a strong ecclesiatypical orientation the strands of theatypology and christatypology are evident. She justifies the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption and other such themes by attempting a reinterpretation of their symbolism. While Carr rejects the passive and submissive approach to Mary,⁵ on the one hand, and the romantic idealisation of her on the other, she praises the Council's attempts to restore her image for women when she says that:

The Second Vatican Council's depiction of Mary as truly human in her faith, at the heart of the human church, model of the church's final goal and transformation, is open to surprising interpretations today, as Mary is seen in new ways as Seat of Wisdom, Queen of Peace, the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mirror of Justice, Comforter of the Afflicted, symbol of

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-197. At this stage Carr also makes use of Avery Dulles' models of the Church although she finds fault specifically with his choice of the Church as Sacramental model. Her concern is that this model is too close to the Church's seeing itself in history as the already perfect kingdom of God on earth, an idea rampant in the Middle Ages. Dulles for his part claims that the institutional Church as model cannot be a primary one. He describes five different ways of being in the Church. The first is the Church as an Institution, the second is the Church as mystical communion, the third is Church as sacrament, the fourth is Church as herald and the fifth is Church as servant. Each one of these models corresponds to Christ, revelation and the function of the Church in society. Each one also has strengths and weaknesses according to scripture and tradition. A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Doubleday and Company, 1974.

⁵ The idea of Mary as being passive and receptive will be discussed later in this thesis. While there is strong evidence of such practices in the tradition I believe that it has not been among the most predominant of issues. The role of Mary as humble handmaid of the Lord is far outweighed by the portrayal of her as either divinity or semi-divinity. Even when women have been taught to follow the example of the humility of Mary it is less likely to have had as negative an effect as that of trying to follow her as an impossible ideal. For a good account of Mary's being portrayed as a model of ideal humility see M. Condren, *The Serpent and the Goddess*, pp. 160-182.

our final freedom in God in her Immaculate Conception and Assumption, as Mother of the Church. Mary is being reclaimed today, especially by women, as a critical symbol in a world where patriarchal models of domination, global warfare, militarism, and hostility are challenged by Christian feminism's personal and political vision of mutuality, reciprocity, cooperation, autonomy in relationship - a love active in the struggles of history. As we interpret the meaning of Mary for our times, in the always new appropriation that is our response to God's living revelation, we participate in the reality to which her symbol points, and we newly discover our relation to her in the mystery of the church.⁶

Despite the many fine ecclesiatypical sentiments expressed here it has been shown that it is no longer possible to justify some of the other symbols cited above. Therefore, Carr's hope that these can be reinterpreted as "specifically female symbols of the created freedom and the final transformation of the world for which women hope"⁷ is now not tenable.

Kari Borresen: *Mater Ecclesiae*

Keeping in mind that the focus of this chapter is ecclesiatypology it will be necessary to discuss a specifically ecclesial title bestowed on Mary by the Church. It centres around Mary as Mother of the Church or *Mater Ecclesiae*. The Scandinavian theologian Kari Borresen has something of significance to say on the matter, therefore, some of her comments in relation to it will be outlined below. In addition, Borresen raises other relevant questions relating to certain theatypical/christatypical and ecclesiatypical themes. A general outline of her thought in this regard is also relevant. The title *Mater Ecclesiae*, for its part, is a rather difficult one in that on the surface it would appear to be ecclesiatypical. Anne Carr takes it as accepted in her Marian theology when she makes the point that although it is not explicitly used in *Lumen Gentium* it is implied in several passages. Carr notes that its right to be accepted as an important title is based on the Council's interpretation of the Cana and

⁶ A. Carr, "Mary in the Mystery of the Church: Vatican Council II", MAW, p. 29.

⁷ A. Carr, *Transforming Grace*, p. 192.

Calvary stories in the gospel of John. The Calvary account especially, according to Carr, is clear evidence of Mary's maternal relationship to the Church (Jn 19:25).⁸ Is the title *Mary Mother of the Church*, therefore, an ecclesiatypical title and can it be saved for insertion into the ecclesiatypical model? It would appear not.

Kari Borresen, writing on Mary, is of a different opinion to that of Carr about the title and how it is interpreted in Church documentation. She claims that in a speech promulgating *Lumen Gentium* in 1964 Paul VI proclaimed Mary as *Mater Ecclesiae*. Prior to this speech the Polish bishops announced that the title should be officially launched at the Council and the presiding Pope at the time, John XXIII, wanted it conferred. However, the doctrinal commission which prepared the Marian document had rejected it. Notably they did so on the grounds that it set Mary above the Church and was, therefore, a departure from the patristic theme of *Ecclesiae Mater* (the Church as mother). Borresen has it that by "promulgating it, therefore, Paul VI turned his back on the *ecclesiotypism* of *Lumen gentium*".⁹ She goes on to say that the title originally was given only to the Holy Spirit and was seldom used of Mary by the Latin writers of the twelfth century onwards. Borresen has no doubt that it is a "(christotypical) title, since it implies that Mary played a part in the redemption".¹⁰

The significance of the title *Mater Ecclesiae* must not be overlooked if we are to find true ecclesiatypology within the Church. Most theologians would no doubt agree that the Church is the pilgrim people of God on a journey through the centuries. Mary's part in this journey is vital for those who wish to keep her within the tradition. Taking the contrast between Carr and Borresen the most common interpretation would follow

⁸ A. Carr, "Mary in the Mystery of the Church": Vatican Council II", MAW, p. 16.

⁹ K. Borresen, "Mary in Catholic Theology", Conc 168 (1983), p. 54.

¹⁰ *Ibid*

that of Carr's especially since the Second Vatican Council.¹¹ What is to be decided here is how *Mater Ecclesiae* is to be interpreted for this thesis. If it were easy to describe as either a theotypical or christatypical term it could have been written into the previous relevant chapters. If one follows Borresen's viewpoint it will not fit comfortably into the ecclesiastical section later on. Since the title directly connects Mary to the Church and something has been made of it in official Church teaching, then, it cannot be passed over.

Perhaps what is even more important to note is the sentiment attached to the word *mother* itself. It would be disconcerting for most people if the term *mother* were to be removed in the description of certain symbolic relationships. In the same way in the Church's life, for centuries, Mary has been seen as first and foremost a mother. She has been portrayed as the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church and the mother of its members. It would be difficult to remove the term from any of these titles without good reason. In Catholicism Mary's motherhood has become closely linked with the transformation caused by Christ in our lives. In the Communion of Saints we are sisters and brothers of each other because we are sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ. As Christ's mission unfolded Mary's care was extended beyond the care of Jesus to the rest of humanity. John Paul II, for example, in relation to the Cana story in John's gospel (Jn 2:1-12) writes of a new dimension to Mary's motherhood. Of the Cana story he says:

... the description of the Cana event outlines what is actually manifested as a new kind of motherhood according to the spirit and not just according to the flesh, that is to say *Mary's solicitude for human beings*, her coming to them in the wide variety of their wants and needs.¹²

¹¹ See, for example, S. de Fiores, "Mary in Postconciliar Theology", *Assess* 1 pp. 480-489.

¹² John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, par. 20, p. 49.

While this statement is appealing and quite acceptable it cannot be taken out of the context within which John Paul intends it to be interpreted. In the same paragraph he continues:

If *through* faith Mary became the bearer of the Son given to her by the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit, while preserving her virginity intact, in that same faith she *discovered and accepted the other dimension of motherhood* revealed by Jesus during his messianic mission.¹³

The simplicity of Mary's motherhood as mother, therefore, disappears when one discovers that it is set in relation to a most unacceptable theatypical element. In the above quotation Pope John Paul is at pains to base Mary's motherhood within the context of her virginity pointing to his belief in the necessity of virginity for Mary's motherhood. Still in relation to the Cana story the Pope says that Mary "*puts herself in the middle*", that is to say *she acts as a mediatrix not as an outsider, but in her position as mother*".¹⁴

The complexity of the situation does not end here especially when that special dimension of Mary's motherhood is again found within the context of a christatypical term. This title has also been cited among a conglomeration of theatypical and christatypical themes. As one theologian expresses it:

...within the Church, Mary is more mother than the Church, more bride than the Church, and, through her exemption from original sin, more virgin than the Church...Mary is mother, bride and virgin *before* the Church and *for* the Church; *in* her above all and *through* her, the Church is mother, bride and virgin.¹⁵

¹³ *Ibid.*, par. 20, p. 47.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, par. 21, p. 50.

¹⁵ Cited in S. de Fiores, "Mary in Postconciliar Theology", *Assess*1, p. 482.

The parallel in official Church teaching is all too familiar but more importantly it should be noted that Mary as Mother of the Church also appears again in relation to the old theatypical images of bridal relationships which were discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. Strong hints of the interrelatedness of these themes are found in *Lumen Gentium*. The following statement makes the case:

The Church...by preaching and baptism...brings forth sons, who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God, to a new and immortal life. She herself is a virgin, who keeps in its entirety and purity the faith she pledged to her spouse. Imitating the mother of the Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she keeps intact faith, firm hope and sincere charity...But while in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph. 5:27), the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase holiness.¹⁶

John Paul II in his account of Mary in *Redemptoris Mater* maintains a clear affinity between Mother-Church and Mother Mary through the common denominator of their virginity.¹⁷ From here he makes the easy transition to both Mary and the Church as being the bride of Christ. The Church for its part is expected to respond to her Spouse with total fidelity. She is called to be the faithful Spouse of Christ which is basic to every marriage covenant. Christ the virginal Spouse asks that his Bride the Church should maintain virginal fidelity.¹⁸

From the foregoing accounts of the reciprocity between Mary and the Church it is evident that the title of *Mater Ecclesiae* certainly has strong christatypical elements as Kari Borresen believes. The title obviously has even stronger theatypical elements. Anne Carr's position that Mary can quite comfortably be taken as Mother of the Church, then, is less satisfactory. Understandably, this means that the title in question

¹⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, par. 64, p. 420.

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, par. 43, p. 98, citing LG 64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, par. 43, p. 98.

is no longer a viable one for an ecclesiatypical Marian theology. It is unfortunate because the symbolism of motherhood nearly always establishes a unique and unrepeatable relationship between two people, that is, the child and its mother. Even when the mother has several children the personal relationship between each one is new and different as each child is brought to maturity in a different way by the maternal love of that parent. Perhaps it is not too late yet for the individual member of the Church to image Mary as her/his mother but in relation to the members of the Church as a whole it can only be said that the title has been spoiled for ecclesiatypical usage.

Given that Kari Borresen has taken a valid stance in claiming that Mary as *Mater Ecclesiae* is not an acceptable symbol for Christian feminists some of her other Marian ideas might be worth mentioning. Not only does she believe that the title *Mater Ecclesiae* is of little use but she also believes that the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption "are based wholly on conjectural anthropological theories".¹⁹ Without going into the details of her argument it is enough to say that she rejects the anthropological presuppositions which lie behind the dogmas. In relation to the Immaculate Conception Borresen points out that the Augustinian theory of original sin presupposed a connection between procreation and contamination. Since this assumption has now been abandoned in Catholic theology the formula will eventually lose its meaning and become incomprehensible. Concerning the dogma of the Assumption Borresen is of the same opinion. If, according to the tradition, death was the punishment for original sin and Mary, according to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, did not contract sin the special intervention to preserve Mary's flesh from corruption was superfluous. In the words of Borresen:

¹⁹ K. Borresen, "Mary in Catholic Theology", Conc 168 (1983), p. 51.

With the supporting structures - i.e., the Augustinian doctrine of original sin transmitted by paternal generation, or the classical doctrine of the immortality of the separated rational soul awaiting its risen body - cut from under them, these Mariocentric formulations are left hanging in the thin air of conjecture.²⁰

From statements such as the above concerning her understanding of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption and her ideas on the title *Mater Ecclesiae* it is easy to appreciate the dissatisfaction with theatypology and christatypology in Borresen's approach. In addition, Borresen has criticised the Second Vatican Council for its inconsistencies in *Lumen Gentium* especially where it deals with Mary as the New Eve and its attempts to try to appease the maximalists in the christological section. Alternatively, she is pleased by the Council's encouragement of the minimalist line in Marian thinking which became apparent only fourteen years after the definition of the dogma of the Assumption.²¹

It would appear on the surface, then, that Borresen could be acclaimed as a theologian who might foster an ecclesiastical orientation. However, two themes in Borresen's theology would militate against this possibility. Firstly, she would hold little hope of finding common ground between Christian feminists and the Church authorities in relation to Mary. While she accepts that Catholic feminists might want to retain Mary in the tradition as a *model for women* she believes that there is a serious flaw in this position which is rooted in androcentric typology. According to Borresen Mary is a *contradiction to feminism*. She explains her difficulty when she says that:

To make Mary a model for feminists is not only questionable but also absurd, if the essential ecclesiological and Mariological connection between femininity and subordination is ignored or not known. The New Eve theme cannot be used in the struggle for women's liberation precisely because of this asymmetry. It may push Mary to the limits of

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²¹ *Ibid*

the human, but her partner remains divine. More, this symbolism is harmful, because it prevents Christian women from tackling the central problem of how to overcome the androcentric convergence of Scripture and tradition.²²

Taking this statement at its face value it is clear that while Borresen rightly rejects the New Eve theme and the difficulties surrounding subordination she also wrongly eliminates any hope of reclaiming Mary for feminist theology. Reclaiming Mary for women, on the other hand, is one of the aims of ecclesiatypology. Paradoxically Borresen's rejection of Mary for feminist theology does not mean that she believes that Mary should be eliminated from the tradition altogether. She would hope that a completely different kind of research could be done on Mary and sociology which she refers to as socio-Mariology. Borresen cites the political situation in the southern Americas to state her case. She claims that the Mary of liberation theology in Latin America sprang from the dire social conditions of those peoples. Borresen is now saying that national economic weakness and Marian devotion are closely tied.²³

Here, however, lies the second objection to Borresen's work as ecclesiastical. Her desire for a new socio-Mariology is founded upon her experience as a Norwegian Catholic where her religion in that part of the world is a minority one. For this reason she admits an inability to relate to Mary as she is found in traditional Marian countries. In her own words Borresen states that "(faced) with Mary as she is venerated in southern Italy or Poland, I am alienated".²⁴ She is, therefore, convinced

²² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55. Aside from Marian theology some work has been done recently in relation to religion and culture in Ireland. Dermot Lane, for example, says that "if inculturation does not take place, then the message of faith will simply end up addressing issues that belong to a bygone age. At best, faith will evoke feelings of nostalgia and, at worst, it will have nothing to say to contemporary questions". D. Lane, "Faith and Culture: The Challenge of Inculturation", *RCult*, pp. 19-20. See also Donal Murray who points out that the "vindication of freedom is itself a moral demand which fuels concern for poor and oppressed members of the human family, a concern which is also one of the great moral issues underlying contemporary Western culture". D. Murray, "Morality and Culture in Dialogue", *RCult*, p. 213.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

that the differences of attitudes to Mary are determined more by cultural proprieties than by confessional background. What Borresen, in fact, is saying is that if poverty and oppression were gone from these countries Mary as a religious symbol would also disappear from the lives of the people.²⁵ Thus, it can be claimed here that Borresen's own background prevents her from understanding fully what Marian devotion means to these peoples. There is, therefore, something of a patronising approach to her argument. If what Borresen claims is to be taken seriously she is then questioning the authenticity of the religion of people in countries where Marian devotion is integrated into the faith proper. Where there is a doubt hanging over Mary in relation to a people's faith there will be in turn little hope of a true ecclesiatypological understanding.

Maria Kassel: Mary as Archetype

The real significance of Borresen's viewpoint, however, is that she believes in the possibility of *some kind* of socio-Mariology. Even in the absence of a socio-Mariological research it can be said at the outset that ecclesiatypology must be strongly rooted not only in a confessional but also a social background. More will be said about this later on in the sections allocated to Ruether's ecclesiatypology and where that fits in with an understanding of liberation theology. In the meantime something of a sharper focus must now follow in relation to Mary's own place within the Church itself. It is clear from the theatypological and christatypological stance taken in this thesis that the traditional symbols, no matter how deserving, cannot be allowed to dull the critique.²⁶ While Mary has occupied a place in Catholic imagination her symbolic

²⁵ *Ibid.* It is only fair to point out here, however, that Borresen's thesis centres around her hope that if a confessional background is not necessary then those of non-Catholic Christian faiths might also find reason to reconsider Mary as one who might be reintroduced into their respective religions.

²⁶ See, for example, Andrew Greeley who sees Mary as the one who symbolises the mother love of God. However, despite some rather interesting revelations in this respect he works with familiar and traditional symbols revealing a book that is not liberating for women. A. Greeley, *The Mary Myth*, The Seabury Press, 1977.

function defies definition. Except, that is, for the relevant ecclesiastical symbolism which associates her with the Church on earth. Towards the end of chapter four it was suggested that one acceptable *foundation* for Mary in this regard might stem from a source which portrays Mary as archetype of the Church. Such was the argument of the Marian theologian Otto Semmelroth who developed that idea from Ambrose's teaching on Mary as type of the Church.

Semmelroth's understanding of Mary as archetype of the Church was taken in this thesis merely as a starting point but more has to be said. Its main advantage is that it can be retrieved from the tradition and reinterpreted into an ecclesiastical context. A stalemate could emerge, however, if the disadvantages of this symbol do not come to light or if some kind of progression is not evincible.²⁷ There are certain questions, for example, that Semmelroth's work does not raise. Is Mary to be imaged as archetype of the Church or archetype for women? If she is an archetype for the Church as a whole is this acceptable to Christian feminists? If that image is acceptable what, then, are the shortcomings of the typology in itself? If Mary is an archetype only for women is there not a danger that Marian theology will become exclusive being useful only to feminist theology? In order to answer these questions it will be argued below that Mary can be imaged as a *type* of the Church as opposed to an archetype provided the following points are taken into consideration. Firstly, Mary cannot be taken as an archetype solely for women since the very essence of *Church* is that it is inclusive of men as well as women. A Mary who is a type only for women is alienating and divisive. Secondly, there is a difficulty with the term *archetype* itself since it implies hierarchy. These two questions will now be considered with the insights of depth psychologist Maria Kassel.

²⁷ In popular understanding an archetype is a constantly recurring symbol in literature, art or myth.

Kassel would want to retrieve Mary as an archetype of the feminine and then relate this symbol to the Church as a whole. Her thesis is based on two presuppositions. The first, unlike Borresen, revolves around the importance of 'Mary'²⁸ in Kassel's own life. According to Kassel, if it were not for 'Mary' she believes that significant stimulating emotions would have been missing from an otherwise traditionally Catholic process of socialisation. The second presupposition marks a belief that Christianity can be compared with other religions since the psychological structure of religious behaviour and experience are similar. Kassel thus draws the conclusion that this psychological structure provides the basis for the analogy of archetypes which are found in humanity at large.²⁹

Her research is relevant, for this thesis, at one level only. That is, she sees a relationship between 'Mary' and the development of the feminine within the Catholic Church. However, Kassel's means of building up this relationship is founded upon a theotypical orientation.³⁰ She portrays an image of the Great Mother and compares it to the archetype in 'Mary' relating it back to primeval times and its ancient mythological representations. The conclusion drawn by her understanding of an archetypal 'Mary' tells of a patriarchal Church that somehow through her retained the feminine as a reservoir for future creative possibilities. On the positive side this means that 'Mary' became the foil for a masculine consciousness when it tended to drift into a cold or arid one-sided rationality. As a result a rich imagery existed which provided a welcoming attraction for the affections of the faithful. Kassel goes on to

²⁸ Kassel puts the name 'Mary' into inverted commas because she is taking it as an archetype and not just a proper name.

²⁹ M. Kassel, "Mary and the Human Psyche considered in the Light of Depth Psychology", *Conc* 168 (1983), p. 75.

³⁰ Kassel also believes that any attempt to repress 'Mary' in favour of Christ must "be understood as the expression of a masculine consciousness that is becoming ever more one-sided in the Church". *Ibid.*, p. 78.

say that in a Church which has suppressed the feminine element 'Mary' provides a psychological basis which avoids holistic impoverishment.³¹

One would be inclined to agree with Kassel in her desire to retain 'Mary' in the tradition given that it is helpful towards the feminisation of an overly masculinised Church. The idea of 'Mary' as archetype is particularly useful if a proper and holistic process of socialisation is to take place within the Institution. This in its turn would allow for a contemporary feminine consciousness to manifest itself in the form of self sufficiency for women. Provided that Christian feminism does not try to remove 'Mary' from the Church and set her up as an exclusive archetype for themselves her influence in the collective unconscious is worthy of greater research in this area. Unfortunately, however, the very real danger of that happening might be all too real. In addition, Kassel tries to reinterpret the symbols of Mary's virginity, her virginal motherhood, and the Eve/Mary typology as those which express woman's autonomy over against man. This, she insists would result in psychological independence. Kassel also believes that 'Mary's' virginal conception and her virginal motherhood points to an autonomy of the feminine leading to a new stage of fuller humanity within the Church.³²

Transforming the Archetype

So much has been said about Mary as archetype that some reference must be made to the term itself. In this respect Kassel and Semmelroth have similar viewpoints. Kassel, like Semmelroth, does not speak of Mary as *type* but of *archetype*.³³ It has

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

³³ This is not to claim that a Church without female influence is any less human than a Church without male influence. On the contrary if either influence is missing or subordinate to the other then the Church is not fully humanised.

already been said that this way of thinking has sprung from the theme of Mary as type of the Church. However, it is now necessary to find out more about the deficiencies of such a title. If the ecclesiatypical approach is to become a new paradigm of equality for the Church anything which might imply hierarchy is of little use. The point being made here is that there is a fundamental difference between Mary as archetype of the Church and Mary as type relevant to the ecclesiatypical approach to Marian theology. *In part* the ecclesiatypical approach is an attempt to treat of Mary as an ordinary woman with an extraordinary story and how she copes with that mystery in the course of a normal lifetime. Ecclesiatypology, therefore, places Mary within the body of the Church as the People of God. To claim that Mary is archetype is to set her over and above the Church in a way that is unacceptable to ecclesiatypology.

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza draws a noteworthy parallel between archetypes and prototypes in her examination of a critical feminist hermeneutic of the bible portraying another way of looking at typology. In order to contextualise Fiorenza's statement in relation to the point being made in this thesis the following quotation has been extracted from her work. She says:

Both archetype and prototype denote original models. However, an archetype is an ideal form that establishes an unchanging timeless pattern, whereas a prototype is not a binding timeless pattern or principle. A prototype, therefore, is critically open to the possibility of its own transformation.³⁴

No doubt the word prototype is just as technical a term as the word archetype and will have its own drawbacks but the reasoning behind Fiorenza's thinking is what counts here. The very nature of the ecclesiatypical approach calls for a Marian typology. If Mary, then, is to be imaged as a type of the Church Fiorenza's description of that term offers a more comprehensive and less static image than does the term archetype. The

³⁴ E. Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 33.

ecclesiatypical model purports to be novel in its mutability further pointing to the fact that theotypical and christatypical symbols are static by their very nature. Alternatively, anything that is open to the possibility of its own transformation, such as the word prototype as Fiorenza claims, is useful to a new interpretation of Marian theology. The capacity to change and transform, then, is vital to a proper understanding of ecclesiatypology.

In the final part of this first section there has been an attempt to move towards an ecclesiatypical approach by searching for ecclesiatypical possibilities within the works of a number of Christian feminists. It is evident, even from these few sample theologians that possibly all theologians, feminist or otherwise, writing in Marian theology would be unlikely to eliminate all theotypical and christatypical themes from their works. The tendency is either to reinterpret these symbols in the light of feminist theology or rid Marian theology of only some of them. However, to date, purely ecclesiatypical theologians who reject all of the old theotypical and christatypical symbols and themes have not been found.³⁵ Even the Lutheran theologian Alvin Horst who has written an article on ecclesiatypical Mariology believes that the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption could remain within the Catholic tradition on condition that they are reinterpreted ecclesiatypically!³⁶ If this were the case, he continues, the dogmas could become acceptable to Lutheran Christians.³⁷

³⁵ See, for example, Els Maeckelberghe who has written an extensive work on eleven feminist theologians all of whose work contains some form of theotypical or christatypical themes. E. Maeckelberghe, *Desperately Seeking Mary*, Kok Pharos, 1991.

³⁶ It is important to note that Horst's understanding of ecclesiatypology and mine are quite different. He does not seem to have developed his ecclesiatypology beyond simply stating that Mary as a type of the Church is a sort of pointer to Christ. However, he does view the themes of mediatrix and co-Redeemer as *Christotypical*. A. Horst, "Mary in Current Theology: A Lutheran View", *CurTheoMis* 15 (1988), pp. 413-417.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 413.

The search for a feminist theologian who has come closest to an ecclesiatypical approach has been found in Rosemary Ruether. The next section will outline some of the more basic themes and ideas in Marian theology which are acceptable to both Ruether and the official teaching of the Catholic Church. The source for these themes and ideas depends on an understanding of the historical Mary as found in the scriptures and a specific interpretation of her faith within that context. Once a portrayal of the historical Mary and her faith have been examined it will then be necessary to reinterpret Mary, yet again, in relation to Christ. What is happening here is that the Marian tradition is being stripped of all symbols that are not acceptable to the ecclesiatypical approach. This in turn requires a process of selection in the attempt to find common Marian themes between Ruether and the Church. A substantial common denominator should then make room for a new ecclesiatypical method.

17. Ruether: An Ecclesiatypical Foundation

Keeping in mind that an encounter with the historical Mary is an important one here some relational aspects concerning Jesus also must not be overlooked. There can be little doubt that one of the most vexing questions ever to have been encountered by scripture scholars and theologians alike centres around the different arguments concerning the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. On the one hand, there is the shadowy biographical outline of the historical Jesus and, on the other hand, there are the various interpretations of his *kerygma* attested to from the time of the early Church down to the present day. Later on in this section a reference will be made to the fact that there are those who would claim that there is a radical discontinuity between the message of Jesus of Nazareth and the essential nature of Christian faith as it has been interpreted subsequently by interested parties. Even among the interested parties, that is, the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions, we are in

danger of projecting our own particular theologies back on to Jesus' message as if our interpretations came from his own mouth. We must, therefore, guard against an approach which would exclude either an over-emphasis on the historicity of Jesus or a failure to comprehend the essential nature of faith.

It is not possible here to launch into the intricacies of that complex historical/christological science referred to above. Nor is it entirely relevant to this thesis except to say that what applies to the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith also applies *in some respects* to the Mary of history and the Mary of faith. The significant point, of course, is that there exists an *essential difference of divinity* between Mary and Jesus. Therefore, perhaps it is not too presumptuous to claim that it is possible to be less critical when dealing with historical data concerning Mary than it is with Jesus. Nonetheless, it is just as justifiable to derive a picture of Mary from the gospels as it is to derive one of her Son. While the section below concentrates on Ruether's interpretation of the historical Mary it is hoped that a dichotomous distinction will not emerge between that and our faith understanding of her. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that the picture of Mary, as she will be portrayed below, is one which is derived almost exclusively from the stories of the New Testament. From this standpoint it will be possible to show what the essential relationships are between Mary, her Son and the Church.

The Historical Mary.

Both Ruether and the Church have something in common in that they firmly believe that there must be a return to the scriptures in order to ground Marian theology properly. The strongest case for ecclesiatypology is to be found in Luke's gospel but Matthew's gospel must also be mentioned if the historical Mary is to be understood in a more comprehensive light. One of the greatest successes of the Second Vatican

Council was its return to the scriptures time and again for evidence of Mary's role in the history of salvation.³⁸ Ruether also takes a keen interest in the historical Mary and how she is portrayed in the scriptures. Sometimes the interpretations between the Church and Ruether diversify but overall it will become evident that this is of no great consequence for the ecclesiatypical approach. The intention is simply to locate Mary as she is found in the scriptures in the hope of revealing the Mary who lived in time and history. The historical Mary is a conventional woman, an idea which Ruether herself condones.³⁹

To begin with Ruether makes a distinction between the unconventionality of Mary Magdalene and the conventionality of Mary the mother of Jesus. There is no doubt in Ruether's mind that Mary Magdalene would be a better role model for women. She bases this belief on the fact that the Magdalene was rewarded for her loyalty to Jesus by his appearing to her at the Resurrection. It was a reward that his mother was not to receive.⁴⁰ Paradoxically this does not go against the main stream of the present thesis. Mary the mother of Jesus, it is being argued, is an ordinary woman who had to struggle in faith throughout her life with a recalcitrant Son from the time he got lost in the Temple (Lk 2:41-49) to his apparent suicidal ways on the Cross (Lk 23:ff). The ecclesiatypical approach is partly about standing in Mary's shoes and taking that seemingly thankless journey from the Annunciation to the Resurrection. In the above respect, therefore, Ruether's point makes a stronger case for the ecclesiatypical approach.

³⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, pars. 55-59, pp. 415-418.

³⁹ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the Magdalene's love for Jesus was something which made the Church uncomfortable and in time she was wrongly portrayed in the tradition as a prostitute. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

It is a well known fact that the accounts of the historical Mary are sparse. The paucity of references and the detrimental rather than praiseworthy nature of those references helps to make the ecclesiastical case. Ruether clearly makes this point. She reminds her readers that there is little reference to Mary either historically or symbolically in the New Testament. In Galatians 4:4 Paul does not even mention Mary by name, he refers to her simply as a woman who brought forth a Son under the law.⁴¹ Only the gospels and Acts mention Mary by name. Nor is Ruether blind to the essential differences between Matthew and Luke. In Matthew Joseph has the leading role and plays the decisive part. He receives the angel's message informing him of the impending miracle birth. He also receives the second message telling him to take the Mother and Child and flee into Egypt. In addition, the all important genealogy is one which traces the Davidic descent of Jesus through to Joseph himself. When Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant he is about to divorce her only to be told that the Child is of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew's drama Mary is the passive instrument of God while Joseph is the active one.⁴²

The above well known account of Matthew's narrative is used by Ruether to show that he does not make of Mary an important figure at all. Matthew's account betrays a patriarchal telling of the story. Here is a woman who is a passive instrument in the drama of salvation. Ruether separates the Matthean and Lukan stories making it clear that we are not used to reading them apart. Mary's insignificant place in the order of

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31. Other authors are of the same opinion. Hans Kung says that we know nothing of Mary's descent and she plays no part at all in the early Christian testimonies. Even though one of the earliest writers, Paul, mentions her he does so only in a very general way emphasising the human birth from a woman. H. Kung, *On Being a Christian*, p. 458. Elizabeth Johnson goes further in relation to the historical Mary. She says that second and third century traditions do not contribute any further trustworthy information independent of the scriptures that is subject to verification through historical methods. Johnson, thus, draws the conclusion that there is little or no critical basis for interpreting theological statements about Mary that can be said to be of any real historical significance. E. Johnson, "The Symbolic Character of Theological Statements about Mary", *JEcumStuds* 22 (1985), p. 316.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

things becomes clearer in Matthew when we learn from the scripture scholar John Meier that Mary's pregnancy greatly disturbed Joseph. He had legal rights over her even before they were married. If he found that she was pregnant by another man Joseph could have her put to death according to the strict letter of the law. Joseph is, thus, placed in a dilemma. While he wishes to show kindness and loyalty to Mary, on the one hand, he must satisfy the requirement of the law on the other. In order to solve his problem Joseph decides to serve Mary privately with a document of divorce. Apparently he does not ask himself how this would protect Mary from public shame if the Child were to be born out of wedlock.⁴³

Luke, however, according to Ruether, has a different kind of message relating to the same theme. With Luke Mary is the central figure. The angel visits Mary and not Joseph. Mary becomes the personal agent in the Incarnation since she is consulted in advance by the angel. Mary then goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth without having obtained permission from her future husband either on this matter or about the conception. Where Matthew simply reports that Jesus is born, Luke places Mary at the centre of the birth (Lk 2:7). Mary is also active in another sense. She meditates on the mission of her newborn Son by keeping all these things since she "pondered them in her heart" (Lk 2: 19). In the same way Luke has Simeon address Mary specifically with the prediction that a sword will pierce her heart (Lk 2:34). When Jesus manifests his wisdom in the Temple at twelve years of age it is Mary who takes the initiative to admonish him. Luke once more repeats that after Jesus' reply Mary "treasured all these things in her heart" (Lk 2:51).⁴⁴

⁴³ J. Meier, *Matthew*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁴ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, pp. 33-34.

Above, therefore, we have two different accounts of the same events. On the one hand, in Matthew Mary is the historical mother of Jesus who is a passive woman waiting to be told how to react to an extraordinary situation. In Luke she becomes an independent agent cooperating with God albeit in a mystery beyond her comprehension. There is nothing in official Church teaching that would not be in accord with Ruether in these findings on the historical Mary so far as they are outlined above. Ruether obviously prefers the Lukan interpretation which is also the choice of the Second Vatican Council in relating the Incarnation story. Mary is the one, according to the documents, who freely gave her consent to conceive the Son of God. The documents go on to point out that this consent was not something passive that took place in the life of Mary. Instead, it required her free cooperation through faith and obedience.⁴⁵ The two Popes writing subsequently to the Council, Paul VI and John Paul II are of the same mind.⁴⁶

If any of these three official sources had shown references to Matthew's interpretations instead of Luke's a common denominator between Ruether and the Church might have been more difficult to find. Significant for the ecclesiastical approach, however, is the interpretation of Matthew's gospel on the events surrounding the Nativity. While the Lukan account is more important Matthew's account is not without its advantages. It grounds the historical Mary within the confines of her culture showing the limitations placed on women of her time. It, thus, provides a backdrop for an understanding of a woman who would have found it very difficult to rise above the station in society wherein she found herself. The struggle

⁴⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, pars. 56-57, pp. 415-416.

⁴⁶ Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, pars. 16-18, pp. 30-32 and John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, pars. 12-16, pp. 27-36.

for Mary within this context is at the core of the ecclesiatypical approach and should not be forgotten as the argument progresses. More will be made of this in due course.

The Faith of Mary

Still keeping the historical Mary of the scriptures as a basis from which to work another theme relevant to the ecclesiatypical approach emerges. That is, Mary's faith. This theme is also portrayed in much the same way by both Ruether and Church teaching. It highlights a woman who struggles with her faith and suffers for doing so throughout the course of her lifetime. Ruether's reading of the scriptural texts tells of a mother who does not understand the true nature of her Son's mission. Yet, loyally and stubbornly she remains with him from the moment of his conception to his death at the hands of the mighty Roman authorities. Ruether guides the reader into noticing some of the more poignant aspects of Mary's life. It would appear that Mary did not receive much gratitude from her Son for her loyalty. Some of the most significant passages can be interpreted to point to Jesus' rejection of Mary and his family in relation to his mission. For example, he remarked that those who would be saved must be ready to leave their families and join him and his followers (Lk 12:49-53); he disclaimed the honour of being his mother's Son in favour of his mission (Lk 11:27-28) and he appeared to Mary Magdalene and other female disciples at his Resurrection but not to his mother. Such negative attitudes seem to reflect the relationship Jesus had with his family and his mother in particular.⁴⁷

These sample passages account for some of the most important aspects of Jesus' life and mission but it is at these times that Jesus seems least interested in his mother. In the fourth Gospel relations between Jesus and Mary are not much better. When Mary asks Jesus to do something about the shortage of wine at the marriage feast of Cana

⁴⁷ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, pp. 37-38.

he applies rather abruptly "(woman), what concern is that to you and to me"? (Jn 2:4). Yet, we see from the infancy narratives that Mary said "yes" at the Annunciation. This is the loyal commitment of an ordinary woman to an extraordinary set of circumstances despite her Son's apparent impatience at her lack of understanding of his mission. Mary remains there throughout his ministry in doubt and anguish for an erstwhile Son whom she knows is preaching his way on to a Roman cross. Mary's struggling faith becomes more obvious as one reflects upon the above passages. The relationship between Mary and her Son would have been psychologically, emotionally and spiritually draining for the mother.

Von Balthasar has a point worth quoting here. Writing about the Marian *Fiat* or Mary's "Yes" at the time of the Incarnation he says:

What is basic to the infinite elasticity of the Marian Yes is that it again and again stretches beyond understanding and must consent to what is not within the domain of the humanly possible, foreseeable, bearable or fitting. It must embrace virginal conception by an already married woman, her "not understanding" the reply of her twelve-year-old, to her being painfully rebuffed by her Son (some twenty years later) and finally her being abandoned at the foot of the Cross and committed to "another son", John...These events repeatedly challenge her understanding and demand an endlessly growing readiness (without any resistance).⁴⁸

Ruether's portrayal of Mary's faith reflects Von Balthasar's thinking. They both tell of a woman who tries hard to come to terms with the fact that her Offspring is none other than the Son of God. This is the work of a lifetime. Ruether does not deny that Mary is a woman of faith but it is the faith of a Mother often confused and hurt by the apparent aloofness and abrasiveness of her own Child. Yet, she is a mother who never

⁴⁸ H. Von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, p. 207. Peter Bearsley would disagree with such a viewpoint. Instead, he believes that what Mary does for Jesus she does as his greatest disciple. He says of the Cana story, for example, that Mary does not feel rebuffed by Jesus' reply and that there has not been a rupture in the relationship. Bearsley's reasoning is that if Mary had felt her request rejected in some way she would not have gone to the waiter to tell them to do whatever her Son had commanded. P. Bearsley, "Mary the Perfect Disciple: A Paradigm for Mariology", TS 41/3 (1980), p. 486.

abandons him. Nowhere in the gospels does Mary appear out of the presence of her Son. From the Annunciation to the cross she is at his side despite the difficulty and constant battle with her faith. According to Ruether, then, Mary's faith is quite imperfect but it never gives up. It is a faith close to the struggle that takes place in the ordinary human heart of every believer.

Parallels can again be drawn between Ruether's understanding of the struggle Mary experienced at a faith level and that of Church teaching. While the theotypical and christatypical approaches have built up the picture of a perfect woman with a superhuman faith some current ecclesiastical doctrinal statements reflect the faith of a woman struggling with the realities of everyday life. Writing on Mary's faith John Paul II emphasises how difficult it is for her to cope with such a mysterious Son. Again in reference to the Annunciation the Pope believes that Mary embarks on a "pilgrimage of faith".⁴⁹ The very use of the term pilgrimage itself implies struggle. In order to strengthen his case the Pope draws a comparison between the faith of Abraham and that of Mary. Just like Abraham Mary believed in a "hope against Hope".⁵⁰ He continues, "(to) believe means 'to abandon oneself to the truth of the word of the living God, knowing and humbly recognizing 'how unsearchable are his judgments and how *inscrutable his ways*'" (Rom 11:33).⁵¹ In this way Mary at the will of the Most High conforms herself to God's "unsearchable judgments" and "inscrutable ways" with only a "dim light of faith".⁵²

⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, par. 14, p. 33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² *Ibid*

The Pope believes that Mary's struggle with her faith continued throughout her life with Jesus. John Paul cites his reasons. Jesus was born in extreme poverty in a stable at Bethlehem and shortly afterwards Mary was told at the presentation to Simeon at the Temple that a sword would pierce her own soul (Lk 2:34-35). This, John Paul interprets as meaning that Mary will have to live a life of obedience and suffering in faith. She will then have to flee into Egypt because of Herod's antics (Mt 2:13) where she will have to live a hidden life with Jesus at Nazareth "hid with Christ in God through faith" (Col 3:3). Through all these "trials and adversities" Mary holds fast to her faith day after day but she does so with a particular "heaviness of heart". In its turn this is linked with a sort of "night of faith", a "kind of 'veil' through which one has to draw near to the Invisible One and to live in intimacy with the mystery". The Pope continues along in the same vein concerning Mary's faith until the end of the life of Jesus.⁵³

The Mary of Faith

The focus so far has been on a return to the scriptures to find the historical Mary which reflects time and again Mary's humanity. However, in previous chapters in this thesis much has been made also of the symbolic Mary. At this stage, the relationship between the two claims a new emphasis. The Dutch theologian Els Maeckelberghe, for example, notes with concern that one writer in particular has difficulty in distinguishing the difference between the historical and the symbolic Mary.⁵⁴ She refers to Catharina Halkes' work as a case in point.⁵⁵ Maeckelberghe criticises Halkes for not following through her distinction between the two ways of imaging Mary.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pars. 14-17, pp. 33-39.

⁵⁴ E. Maeckelberghe, *Desperately Seeking Mary*, p. 14.

⁵⁵ C. Halkes, "Mary and Women", *Conc* 168 (1983), pp. 66-73.

Maeckelberghe asks of Halkes if there are two different Mariess, a strictly human one and a strictly divine one? Maeckelberghe, thus, writes:

Halkes distinguishes between the historical Mary and the images of Mary. Do humanity and divinity of Mary also follow this distinction? These questions cannot be answered, as Halkes has not yet offered clues in the articles she has written...Halkes wants to picture the person Mary actually was. This seems to me an impossible task, as there are no data available about the historical Mary. The only accounts we have are the New Testament writings and the apocrypha. These writings, however, do not offer a historical account. They are a reflection upon the experience that Jesus is Christ. The faith is communicated by way of stories, and Mary is part of these. The stories function so as to proclaim this faith in Christ and all elements have to underpin this, also Mary. As a consequence these writings offer only an image of Mary. This becomes obvious if one for instance compares the Matthean and the Lukan Mary. Every attempt to tell something about Mary how she really was thus has to run aground.⁵⁶

The first question that Maeckelberghe asks of Halkes with respect to the divinity of Mary has already been answered in this thesis by recalling the untenability of the theotypical approach. Mary is, therefore, neither divine nor is she an incarnation of the divine, as Jesus is.⁵⁷ A second point made by Maeckelberghe in relation to the humanity of Mary, however, is of greater import here. It is difficult to comprehend how she can offer such a loose critique of the New Testament texts (as opposed to the Apocrypha) on the basis that they are not historical. While it is true to say that there is little data available on the historical Mary it is not true to say, as Maeckelberghe does, that there is no data available. If we turn our focus from those symbolic divine aspects of Mary⁵⁸ and re-focus on her humanity as evident in the New Testament we have

⁵⁶ E. Maeckelberghe, *Desperately Seeking Mary*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ An important point to note is the fact that although Mary is not to be imaged as a Goddess it does not exclude her from possessing that aspect of divinity which properly belongs to all human beings. In the words of Mary Grey, "(this) does not mean that she cannot function symbolically as the evocation of the divine female present in every woman". M. Grey, "Reclaiming Mary: a Task for Feminist Theology", *TWay* 29 (1989), p. 337.

⁵⁸ It should also be noted that although Mary is the sole female archetype within traditional Christianity there is little room for such an ambivalent symbol in ecclesiastypology. Nonetheless, it is well worth being aware of Els Maeckelberghe's work in the area of Marian symbolism. After an examination of the principles of interpretation in Paul Ricoeur she applies some of his findings to

what we need to move from the slim Mary of history to the substantial Mary of faith of the subsequent tradition. This idea reflects something of the development that takes place in the movement from the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith. Although in the case of christology the foundations in history are more substantive than in Marian theology.

Having said this, however, one cannot dismiss too lightly Maeckelberghe's viewpoint. Some of the finest theologians in the world have agonised over the continuity/discontinuity between the content of the scriptures and that which is evident in the various traditions.⁵⁹ In the Protestant tradition, for example, Rudolph Bultmann argues that Jesus is part of the history of Judaism, not of Christianity. He believes that while this Jewish prophet is of historical interest for New Testament theology he neither has nor can have significance for Christian faith. In one of his major works Bultmann claims that "(the) message of Jesus is a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament rather than a part of that theology itself".⁶⁰ The Roman Catholic theologian James Mackey, on the other hand, counters this argument in the following way when he says:

More recent theory of faith has shown that there is more than one way of thinking about the nature of faith and of conceiving Jesus' role as founder of a faith; so that the quest of the historical Jesus is not pre-empted by presuppositions about the nature of faith any more than it is by any other of the presuppositions we met in the course of this survey. The quest has not in fact been halted, not even by the great scholarly bulk of Bultmann...⁶¹

Marian symbolism in a quest to interpret the Mary of tradition. E. Maeckelberghe, *Desperately Seeking Mary*, pp. 64-86.

⁵⁹ See, for example, the works of E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke*, SPCK, 1984; R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, Geoffrey Chapman, 1977; Joachim Jeremias, *the problem of the historical Jesus*, Fortress Press, 1967; J.P. Mackey, *Jesus the Man and the Myth*, SCM, 1979; Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958 and Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

⁶⁰ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol 1, p. 3.

⁶¹ J.P. Mackey, *Jesus the Man and the Myth*, pp. 45-46.

The above brief comments are meant to do little more than point to a very complex matter in relation to the difficulties surrounding the Jesus of history and the Christ of Faith. It has already been said that where these interpretations apply to Jesus they also apply to Mary although the arguments are not so serious in her regard. One reason is that Jesus the Christ is at the very *alpha* and *omega* of our Christianity. Mary is not. However, this does not mean the scriptural accounts of the historical Mary are to be dismissed in a way that Maeckelberghe earlier suggests. While these accounts are sparse it is well to recall Raymond Brown's opinion on the paucity of scripture references in relation just, for example, to the infancy narratives. He claims that although in quantity they constitute only "a total of four out of eighty-nine Gospel chapters, the infancy narratives have an importance far greater than their length".⁶² Such a point of view could also be applied to the references containing the Marian texts. Furthermore, that well known *Frere de Taize* of the Protestant tradition Max Thurian claims the following in his study on Mary when he points out that "(there) would be no point in a study of the vocation of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Lord, if the significance of it were merely historical".⁶³ The accounts of Mary in the scriptures, then, are the seeds that produce the flowering of Marian theological doctrine in subsequent centuries.⁶⁴

⁶² R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, p. 25.

⁶³ Max Thurian, *Mary Mother of the Lord Figure of the Church*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ In arguing in favour of a line of continuous succession between scripture and tradition the Second Vatican Council says that, "Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal. Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. And Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching. Thus it comes about that the Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Hence, both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal feelings of devotion and reverence". Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, Translation in A. Flannery, *VatCounc2*, par. 9, p. 755.

Christ and Mary

Maeckelberghe's quotation raises another important matter close to the debate reflecting the historic Mary and the symbolic Mary of the tradition. This issue also needs to be addressed urgently. This asks how Mary is to be interpreted in relation to Christ for the purposes of an acceptable ecclesiatypology. A reminder from Ruether will help to set the tone for a reinterpretation of Mary in this respect. Reflecting on the works of Karl Rahner,⁶⁵ Otto Semmelroth⁶⁶ and Edward Schillebeeckx⁶⁷ Ruether reiterates that Mary's privileges "however great, are to be understood as those of the redeemed creature, not those of a quasi-divinity".⁶⁸ In trying to develop a theology which puts Mary into some kind of perspective suitable for the faithful she recalls the Mary of her childhood memories. Ruether believes that "God and Christ were somewhere in the distance, like the priests, but Mary was the one you talked to if you wanted to pray".⁶⁹ This tells us where Ruether hopes to locate her understanding of Mary. That is, within the experiential as witnessed by humanity. She claims that "(human) experience is both the starting point and the ending point of the circle of interpretation".⁷⁰ One can conclude from Ruether, therefore, that Mary is the *receptive* understanding of humanity while Christ is its mystical sacramental, community. Both co-exist in any Christian Church.⁷¹

⁶⁵ K. Rahner, *Mary the Mother of the Lord*, St. Alban's, 1974.

⁶⁶ O. Semmelroth, *Mary Archetype of the Church*, Gill and Son, 1964.

⁶⁷ E. Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, London, 1964.

⁶⁸ R. Ruether, "Mariology", DCT, p. 346.

⁶⁹ R. Ruether, *Disputed Questions: On Being a Christian*, JF, pp. 111-112.

⁷⁰ R. Ruether, "Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation", FIB, p. 111.

⁷¹ I owe this idea to my supervisor Dr. Ruth Page who helped me to formulate my thinking on this matter.

Given the problem of the existence of sexism in the Church and society, which was dealt with in the previous chapter, it would be expected that feminist theologians might recoil from the very term *receptivity*. Receptivity often implies subordination. For this reason something must be said about it and its place in human relationships before defining Mary's receptivity in relation to Christ. Ruether asks if there is a Marian theology, "a doctrine of the Church as symbolically female - that would allow us to name sexism itself as a sin and point toward the liberation of women and men...?".⁷² She is very aware of the Marian problem and how it has grown up in the tradition over the centuries. The following statement betrays an example of an *unacceptable* portrayal of Mary as receptive. As Ruether remarks:

The Mariological tradition functions in patriarchal theology primarily to reflect and express the ideology of the patriarchal feminine. The Virgin Mary becomes the theological personification of Psyche and Mother Church as Virginal Bride and Mother of Christians...Mary is the obedient female who reverses the disobedience of the First Eve and this makes possible the advent of the New Adam, Christ.⁷³

Ruether reminds her readers that the theology of the virginal Church saw to it that Mary became the representative of the lost alternative before the Fall. Both her Immaculate Conception and Assumption are further formulations of this patriarchal logic. Mary, in the tradition "exemplifies the primordial potential for good of created existence undeformed by sin".⁷⁴ Ruether refers to this kind of Marian theology as the theology of the "male feminine".⁷⁵ In it we sense the hidden and repressed power of femaleness and nature as they exist in the present male dualisms of matter and spirit. Such a theology is unacceptable to Ruether since it has been built solely on male

⁷² R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, p. 152.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

terms using women as the scapegoat for the consequence of sin.⁷⁶ In this way Ruether builds up a picture of what is non-acceptable receptivity.

Ruether is tired of this one-sided relationship of the old world order of male dominance and attempts to liberate Mary from the same fate. To this effect Ruether wants rid of that one sided relationship of patriarchal receptivity and speaks instead in favour of a two-sided relationship. Imitating Martin Buber she speaks of the I-thou relationship where each person must become both an I and a *Thou* to the other. Or, as Ruether puts it "(each) person must become both an actor and a helper of the other".⁷⁷ Marian theology has a role to play here because it allows the male to experience the *feminine* dimension of his nature. Ruether hopes to appeal to even the most patriarchal of male theologians by claiming that he "is able to experience himself as the passive, receptive vassal of divine activity and grace, since all people in the church are thought of as 'feminine' in relation to the dominant 'masculine' ego of 'God'".⁷⁸

Ruether's vision of receptivity is something that people need to develop in order to enter into more mature relationships. However, if only one side, that is, the male is active and the female is receptive women will never learn to be real people and men will never be ready to listen to or help others. The sexist model of male activity and female receptivity denies the very possibility of genuine relationships. If receptivity becomes identified with powerlessness, dependence and self-negation there can be no real relationship. What it means, in effect, is that one side domineers, patronises and punishes while the subordinate responds in a fawning and servile manner. In general

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 151-152.

⁷⁷ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, p. 78.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*

the gap between dominance and receptivity has created a demand for the oppression of women as a group. Women in turn then identify themselves with total self denial at every opportunity and become the auxiliaries in life allowing the man to monopolise the feedback of both the male and female types of life. The man appears, then, as both male and female in his personality while the woman's purpose for existence is to help and reflect this process of male self-becoming.⁷⁹

In order to counteract the sexist ideology of reciprocity Ruether proposes her own model of human relationships portraying a different understanding of that term. Here the person actualises the self by the same process which also supports the dignity and self-actualisation of the other.⁸⁰ It is clear that for Ruether there has to be a process of humanisation within the social and personal structure of the human race. Thus, "a new psychodynamics of relationship that no longer identifies activity with domination and receptivity with dependency"⁸¹ is warranted. Taken in an overall theological context Ruether's thesis is quite effective. Just before considering the reciprocal relationship between Christ and Mary it is worthwhile noting a parallel idea in Ruth Page's works. In the wider setting of God and creation Page points out that it is part of God's nature to relate to creation by entering into the vulnerability of relationships "with finitude, rejoicing when love and freedom combine, but also suffering rejection, inattention and the misuse of belief".⁸²

The significance of Page's statement is not to be missed with regard to Mary's finiteness at three levels. The first concerns Mary as a recipient of Christ's salvific

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁸² R. Page, *The Incarnation of Freedom and Love*, p. 133.

mission. The second concerns Mary's capacity to reciprocate within that context as one of God's creatures and the third relates to Page's theme of the suffering God in Christ. One is immediately reminded here of the Incarnation and Jurgen Moltmann's image of the suffering God when he says that:

The Christ event on the cross is a God event, and conversely, the God event takes place on the cross of the risen Christ. Here God has not just acted externally in his unattainable glory and eternity. Here he has acted in himself and has gone on to suffer in himself.⁸³

It within this context that Ruether's understanding of reciprocal relationships between Mary, Christ and the Church should be seen. Ruether talks about freeing the symbols of Christ, Mary and the Church from the models of male dominance over female passivity.⁸⁴ As she says "(if) Christ represents the emptying out of a divine power that puts itself at the service of others, then Mary, or the church, represents liberated humanity".⁸⁵ While it is Christ who represents the *kenosis* of divine power it is Mary who represents *the person of the church*. A conversation has to go on in history between people so that they can overcome suppressed personhood and dehumanising power. Ruether then asks "who is this Mary who represents the Church?"⁸⁶ She answers her rhetorical question by reminding the reader that the Christian tradition made the Mother of Jesus, Mary of Nazareth, into the chief representative of the Church. What she particularly represented was the mystery of the Incarnation which is the mystery of the coming of Christ into the world.⁸⁷

⁸³ J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 205.

⁸⁴ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, p. 82.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

The Church, Christ and Mary

When it comes to interpreting Mary again in relation to Christ a similar process is to be found within the teaching of the official Church since the Second Vatican Council. At the Council, as we know, Mary was placed within the wider framework of the whole economy of salvation so that she would not become isolated and detached from the central life of the Church. A statement from the Council clearly makes the case for a Marian theology which must be centred in and flow from christology. The Council teaches:

But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. It does not hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but on the contrary fosters it.⁸⁸

This statement comes after an introduction which explains the function of Mary in the plan of salvation including a lengthy section describing Mary's role in biblical terms. A focus is placed on Mary's active consent to God's saving initiative through Christ. The Council adds at this point that Mary is "a *handmaid* (my italics) of the Lord...under and with him, serving the mystery of redemption, by the grace of Almighty God".⁸⁹ Yet, there are times when statements such as these which aim at clarifying the creaturehood of Mary in relation to Christ create problems for some feminist theologians. In this way of thinking Mary is imaged as a subordinated and gentle woman who fulfils her natural role as mother in an unquestioning manner. Her lowly status as *handmaid* of the Lord fits extremely well into the ideal of Christian womanhood as portrayed by the tradition. This reinforces the domestic role for

⁸⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Translation in A. Flannery, VatCounc2, par. 60, p. 418.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, par. 56, p. 416.

woman who should imitate Mary in every way. For example, Marina Warner's account of Mary in traditional iconography reflects such a characterisation:

On the contrary, the fertility ascribed to her reinforces the mythology that motherhood is the central point of a woman's life, where all the streams of her nature converge and prosper. For it is in Catholic countries above all, from Italy to Latin America, that women are subjugated to the ideal of maternity. Therefore, although the Virgin's fruitfulness inspires the gayest and most joyful side of her cult, affirming rather than denying the world, and although in some senses it excites pleasure in love and humanity against a backdrop of blossom and springtime and dance and song, it does not transform her into a divinity who restores the equilibrium between the sexes, or looses women from the bonds of tedious biological teleology. The ideal of fruitfulness, combined with the other Catholic interpretations of purity and humility, as epitomized by the Virgin, do on the contrary bind those bonds tighter.⁹⁰

The Irish feminist theologian Mary Condren is something of the same mindset. Writing a theological/historical account of women, religion and power in Celtic Ireland she returns to the Middle Ages to find that Mary's "cult was the only source of devotion, outside the sacramental realm, not immediately controllable by the hierarchy".⁹¹ It followed that unlike the matricentred goddesses of ancient times, who had fought for their autonomy "Mary would achieve her destiny by being the perfect vehicle for men's designs".⁹² In her anxiety to help sinners Mary "had to pay a major price...she was essentially powerless to challenge the mentality of the wrathful God that made her existence in this form so necessary".⁹³ In christological terms Simone De Beauvoir puts her own interpretation on the dictum that came from Jesus to Mary and the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:26-27). Following the same line of thought as Warner and Condren on Mary's humble role in the order of things De Beauvoir comments:

⁹⁰ M. Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, p. 284.

⁹¹ M. Condren, *The Serpent and the Goddess*, p. 171.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁹³ *Ibid*

For the first time in human history the mother kneels before her son; she freely accepts her inferiority. This is the supreme masculine victory, consummated in the cult of the Virgin-it is the rehabilitation of woman through the accomplishment of her defeat.⁹⁴

The above authors, then, seriously question the future of women if Mary, whose example they are expected to follow, has been humiliated to this extent in the salvific process. In the present day teaching of the Second Vatican Council Anne Carr, for example, would also question the *effect* of the Council's attempt to subordinate Mary to Christ in this way. She is concerned that the Council's purpose may have been a ploy, conscious or otherwise, to diminish the importance of the female in the Church.⁹⁵ Paradoxically, however, Carr suggests that the Second Vatican Council acknowledged the role of women in the Church by casting "Mary as the central symbol of the human church on its way toward redemption and transformation".⁹⁶ It would be unwise and theologically incorrect to reject the findings of writers such as Warner, Condren, De Beauvoir and Carr on this matter. A decision has to be made, therefore, concerning the significance of Mary as handmaid of the Lord and its possible consequences for women in relation to the Church.

Since the ecclesiastical approach of its nature depends on Mary's being recognised as a member of the Church an understanding of her as *humble handmaid of the Lord* within that context calls for an explanation. It is being suggested, therefore, that where that term is taken in relation to God/Christ it does not present any special difficulty for ecclesiatypology. Nor does this viewpoint necessarily contradict that of Warner's, Condren's or De Beauvoir's. Perhaps these theologians might be appeased and find the title an acceptable one for Marian theology under a certain proviso. The

⁹⁴ S. De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 193.

⁹⁵ A. Carr, "Mary in the Mystery of the Church: Vatican Council II", MAW, p. 16.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Marian theologian Michael O'Carroll, writing many years ago clarifies the matter rather quickly. He points out that "Mary's humility did not consist in any habit of self-disparagement".⁹⁷ O'Carroll goes on to explain what he means.

In summary he indicates that there are certain erroneous views which should be met. He believes that humility should never be consonant with falsehood or confused with diffidence for these reveal some flaw in nature and the distrust of one's own powers. Such defects, he says, would never be countenanced by Jesus nor did Jesus countenance them in himself. In Jesus there was no suspicion of phobia or inferiority complex. Rather, he fully displayed his attractive power, his dialectical skills, his knowledge of the scriptures and his understanding of the human heart. Nor was there anything in his nature that could be construed as diffidence. Immediately O'Carroll draws a parallel between Christ and Mary in this respect. Her strengths shine through the slender gospel accounts showing that she was also untouched by such weakness. O'Carroll cites the following examples to state his case. He says that Mary needed boundless confidence in God to assent to the angel's proposal at the Annunciation even although she trembled; she assisted at the first deliberation of the Apostles in the Upper Room and her own humility magnified the Lord for the sake of the lowly. She did all of this in humility with an ardent desire for the coming of the Messiah who would liberate her people and save the world. This humility, for its own part, was a movement of the soul towards God.⁹⁸

Taken in this light and keeping in mind Ruether's understanding of reciprocity in the previous section one should, therefore, not recoil on reading that Mary is considered by the Church to be a *handmaid of the Lord*. This section can now be concluded by

⁹⁷ M. O'Carroll, *Mediatress of All Graces*, p. 132.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-140.

citing just some examples applying to Mary's *humble* position in relation to Christ. Paul VI in *Marialis Cultus* reflects that the Church has approved, within the limits of wholesome orthodox doctrine, devotion to Mary provided that it is "developed in harmonious subordination to the worship of Christ".⁹⁹ In line with this statement the Church sees Mary as a "voice of praise in unison with which the Church wishes to give glory to God".¹⁰⁰ In this respect "Mary is not only an example for the whole Church in the exercise of divine worship but is also, clearly, a teacher of the spiritual life for individual Christians".¹⁰¹ Finally, from Paul VI, "(in) the Virgin Mary everything is relative to Christ and dependent upon him".¹⁰²

John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* depends on Paul's Letter to the Galatians to show that when the fullness of time came the *woman* (Gal 4:4) gave birth to the Son of God. The Pope believes it to be significant that a *woman* is to be found at the centre of the salvific event.¹⁰³ From this point of view a woman becomes the representative of the whole human race. A woman "*represents the humanity* which belongs to all human beings, both men and women".¹⁰⁴ He continues by saying that we can only understand Mary's role in the context of the words "full of grace".¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the *fullness of grace* granted to Mary of Nazareth provokes within her a need to respond to that gift which she has received from God. She replies by saying "(here) am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). Furthermore,

⁹⁹ Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, par. 11, p. 25.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, par. 21, p. 37.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, par. 25, p. 44.

¹⁰³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, par. 3, p. 11.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, par. 4, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, par. 5, p. 15.

the Pope is concerned that this statement should not be deprived of its profound meaning. Nor should it in any way be removed from the overall context of the event in which it took place because it tells of a truth revealed about God and humanity. John Paul's meaning on this matter is worth quoting:

In the expression "handmaid of the Lord", one senses Mary's complete awareness of being a creature of God. The word "handmaid", near the end of the Annunciation dialogue, is inscribed throughout the whole history of the Mother and the Son. In fact, this Son, who is the true and consubstantial "Son of the Most High", will often say of himself, especially at the culminating moment of his mission: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Mk 10:45).¹⁰⁶

For John Paul Mary is the one who takes her place within the *messianic service* of Christ. Mary models herself, like Christ, in the service of the Reign of God. It is this service which constitutes the very foundation of the Reign of God. While Christ will show all people the royal dignity of service that dignity will be joined in the closest way possible to the vocation of every person. Mary, in turn, as the exemplary woman of the bible offers an understanding of what it is to be in *union with God*. As John Paul reminds the faithful "no human being, male or female, created in the image and likeness of God, can *in any way* attain fulfilment apart from this image and likeness."¹⁰⁷

18. The Ecclesiatypical Approach

Given the above outline it does not take a great leap of the imagination to see that both Ruether's writings and the Church's teachings on the relationship between Christ and Mary have certain similarities. Specifically both would agree that Mary is one who in struggling faith and suffering becomes a model for human liberation. This relates to a theme which was dealt with in the last chapter. That was, the *praxis* of the

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, par. 5, p. 16.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, par. 5, pp. 16-17.

man Jesus, his preferential option for the poor and his desire for the liberation of all people in the name of God. It is an important theme for the ecclesiatypical approach because it helps to portray Mary as a disciple of Jesus within the context of her role in the Reign of God as the liberating humble handmaid of the Lord. Just as we took account of the historical Jesus and his *praxis* we now seek parallels with the historical Mary and what that means for the Church as the People of God for today. The section which follows is an attempt to create little more than a starting point for a new approach to Mary for those in Catholicism. It is hoped that it will appeal in some way to both the Church and Christian feminists alike albeit brief in its proposals. The revised foundation is made up of four themes basic to Marian theology. These are Mary as Symbol of Liberation, Mary's *Magnificat*, Mary as Disciple and Mary as Womanguide.

Mary as Symbol of Liberation

Writing an article to commemorate the 150th "Jubilee Celebration of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary"¹⁰⁸ Mary De Cock laments:

For the Christian feminist it is a depressing thought that Catholicism's exemplary cultural symbol of womanhood has been so narrowly described, rigidly defined and mythically exalted by males that she cannot symbolize the three-fold levels of liberation which North American feminist and Latin American theologies demand: a freedom at once personal, political, and spiritual. The choice women must face is either to look beyond Mary for other examples of independent Christian womanhood or to attempt to liberate the symbol itself.¹⁰⁹

Although DeCock is coming from a North American background what she says about Mary and freedom at the personal, political and spiritual levels applies to Christianity in general. She offers a choice, either to look in another direction for these tenets of

¹⁰⁸ M. De Cock, "Our Lady of Guadalupe: Symbol of Liberation?", MAW, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

freedom or to liberate Mary from what she has come to symbolise in our patriarchal tradition. So far in this thesis an attempt has been made to rid Mary of some of the more unacceptable symbols which have gathered about her person. As for Mary at a personal level we cannot liberate her, Christ has already done that, but we can look to Mary as an exemplary disciple who helps us to liberate ourselves. Mary's strength lies primarily as one who is in solidarity with the human race. This in no way suggests that Christ is not also in complete solidarity with us but Christ as well as being human is divine. The mystery that surrounds Christ's divinity sometimes makes it a struggle for us to see in Christ the full potential of our humanity. While we strive to be like Christ in those aspects of our own divinity and humanity we can strive to be like Mary simply in our humanity.

With this understanding it is easy to see why Mary has assumed so much importance for those who suffer socially, politically and spiritually in the world. Nobody can dispute that the cult of Mary has flourished among the poor and those struggling to survive in so many ways in the First, Second,¹¹⁰ Third and Fourth¹¹¹ world countries. Mary represents an identity figure for people who live out their lives in the shadow of the cross not least of those who are women. It has already been established that the Second Vatican Council heralded a period of change for Mary in the Catholic Church. As a result Mary can be reappropriated as a model of discipleship and the symbol of the prophetic mission of the Church. Thus, she becomes a potent image and the sign of hope for the struggles of all oppressed peoples. For Christian feminist theologians Mary can be proposed as a model for women who choose to stay within the

¹¹⁰ The Second World is taken to mean a country like Russia. See, for example, the reintroduction of Marian theology into that country attested to by the Russian theologian Tatiana Goricheva. T. Goricheva, *En Russie, La Femme Et La Mere De Dieu, Etudes* 47 (1990), pp. 143-155.

¹¹¹ The Fourth world is a relatively new social classification. That is, the poor who live in First world countries and would include the homeless, the unemployed, the elderly and the travelling people.

patriarchal tradition. They should reclaim and reinterpret Mary as a sister who consciously and actively decided to participate in God's redemptive work even although she too found herself within a patriarchal structure.

Mary is the fully human being sharing with all other human beings the need for Christ's redemption. She is the faithful disciple who has completed her journey and kept her faith. She has heard the word of God and responded to it in fidelity. The liberation theology of Latin America provides a good example for this hope of a new trend in current Marian theology. Central here is the theological assertion of the *Magnificat* which dictates God's preferential option for the poor. (An examination of this idea will be dealt with through Ruether's work in the next sub-section.) The people of Latin America have been exemplary in their devotion to Mary.¹¹² *Perhaps* they most of all have been the people who have best identified with the lowly position of Mary's social place in the time allotted to her on earth. In her simple condition as a woman she lived the destiny of the poor and marginalised. She was of no account in that she belonged to a colonised people who were subjugated by the great Roman Empire. She was doubly oppressed in a social system which found her subordinate not only in her social class but by her own people of Israel who enslaved her by their anti-woman attitudes of that time.

Within the context of that structural oppression Mary was not a totally independent woman who could plan her life freely. Like all Jewish women she had to follow the directives of her parents, her husband and her religious and political leaders of the day. She was a woman who was deprived of her fundamental human rights. According to Luke's gospel not only was she impoverished in these ways but she was part of the great spiritual tradition of the *anawim*, Yahweh's poor. This required of

¹¹² V. Elizondo, "Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Cultural Symbol: 'The Power of the Powerless'", *Conc* 2 (1977), pp. 25-33.

her, in conjunction with her own people, a shared patience, a living trust in God and an anxious waiting for the Reign of God. It is no wonder that Luke in his gospel identifies her with the spirit of the remnant of Israel who expected everything from the powerful intervention of Yahweh. The *Magnificat* (Lk 1: 46-56) can be taken as proof of such a claim. For these reasons Mary can be symbolised as the one who suffered with all who suffer. She is in solidarity with those who know the meaning of humiliation and oppression for she did not understand the mysterious ways of God but waited forever in hope (Lk 2:50).

Mary becomes the prototype of the Church of the Poor because being a member of the Church she has a *preferential option* for them. In the *already but the not yet* (Mk 1:15) of the Reign of God Mary is an integrating and reconciling power. God's favouritism for the weak of this world changes Mary's enslavement into something new. She is now God's unconditional servant, which is a service of humanity and liberation of both spiritual and material proportions. She became one of the great line of the servants of God as soon as she said "let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). Mary did not have any secret access to God's will through extraordinary or privileged revelations. Rather, her attentive listening and *pondering them in her heart* (Lk 2:19) helped her to cope with the ordinary, perplexing, frightening and mysterious events of her life.

It should now become clearer why Latin American liberation theology has been chosen as the example within which to understand Mary as a model of symbolic liberation. However, a new image of Mary should not be confined by this proposal. It is, after all, only an example but the suffering that takes place in Latin America is close to the socio-cultural conditions of Mary's lifetime. The centuries span the divide between Mary and those who call upon her today as one who accepted God's will and worked towards God's reign. One could, therefore, agree wholeheartedly with Els

Maeckelberghe when she says that the "Mary of the liberation theologies is a challenge to the Western theologies".¹¹³ Elizabeth Johnson writing an article on Mary and the saints makes the point even stronger when she writes that:

While there is as yet no fully developed liberation theology of the saints and Mary, directions taken so far indicate that such a theology entails revaluation of popular religion, recognition of holy men and women who emerge within local communities, and reclamation of the liberating impulse present but repressed in inherited understandings.¹¹⁴

Johnson goes on to say that the turn to *praxis* oriented theologies, whether in European political theology or liberation theology in its Latin American or feminist forms, provides a strong intellectual base for a new theological understanding of the practical critical significance of Mary and the saints.¹¹⁵ She makes an important point when she defines what is meant by Mary and the saints in the tradition. Mary is the one who shines as an exemplar of integral faith, strong hope and sincere love.¹¹⁶ Most ancient is the key meaning as found in the scriptures. Here the saints are shown to be the holy people of God with an emphasis on those who are living. The Hebrew scriptures show that holiness is a mark of the Israelite people who were liberated from bondage and chosen for the covenant. As Deuteronomy points out "you are a people holy to the LORD your God" (Deut 7:6). In turn early Jewish Christian communities transferred the idea to the living members of their own communities. A sample of one of Paul's letters proclaims "(to) all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints...". (Rom 1:7).¹¹⁷

¹¹³ E. Maeckelberghe, *Desperately Seeking Mary*, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ E. Johnson, "Saints and Mary", ST, p. 487.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 486.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 482.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 470-471.

The ecclesiatypical approach, then, is partly about seeing Mary as one of the "people holy to the Lord" and one of the living members who belongs "to all God's beloved". In every sense, that is, spiritually, politically, culturally, socially, biologically and economically Mary suffers and struggles with the people of the Church for the good of all. *Most importantly she struggles as a woman.* The turn to *praxis* gives us an insight as to how the liberation of peoples will take place. In this perspective Mary is neither to be seen as a theotypical or christatypical model for humanity nor is she to be taken as a passive, sexless, subordinate minor in the plan of God's creation. Rather, Mary is to be retrieved precisely as a strong, resourceful, suffering woman and a sister in faith. The image of such a woman of symbolic liberation points to the second significant element in the ecclesiatypical approach. It focusses on the great Marian prayer text in the gospel of Luke, the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55).¹¹⁸

Mary's *Magnificat*

In the *Magnificat* we encounter the fruit of that dialogue between Mary and God. It is a prayer of praise coming forth from the heart proclaiming the greatness, the goodness and the mercy of God. The importance of the *Magnificat* for the ecclesiatypical approach is that it comes from Mary in perfect freedom and resonates throughout the centuries for those who yearn for liberty from oppression of all kinds. Mary reaches out to others confident that God will be at her side as she works to free the rich and the poor, the lowly and the mighty the male and the female and all of creation.¹¹⁹ The

¹¹⁸ According to the scripture scholar Carroll Stuhlmueller, writing in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, the *Magnificat* has been put together from many Old Testament phrases. He adds that the heavy scriptural allusions betray a ponderous piece of poetry showing little originality or imagination. Yet, it is important because it expresses strong emotion and deep conviction. While some scholars attribute this canticle of Hannah's to Elizabeth others attribute it to Mary. Within the tradition of Luke's gospel itself it is clearly attributed to Mary lending an important symbolic significance for this thesis. See, C. Stuhlmueller, "The Gospel According to Luke", JBC, 11, p. 123.

¹¹⁹ Unfortunately it would have made the scope of this thesis too wide to introduce a theme into ecclesiatypology which would have dealt with creation theology. However, Mary's hymn of praise would also include an understanding of the exploitation of the earth and the non-human of God's creatures. They suffer abominably at the hands of injustice and sin. It would make for an interesting

Magnificat is a song of true liberation which visualises a humanity redeemed from the sin of patriarchy and sexism. This sums up what the ecclesiatypical approach has been saying about Mary. What is significant here also is that both the Church and Ruether would have an almost identical interpretation of the *Magnificat*. The direction in which they both move is, thus, relevant. First a word about Ruether and the *Magnificat*.

Behind the *Magnificat* is the tragic character of a world that is unjustly ordered. This is an obstacle to God's plan for humanity and God's Church but through the Messiah God will build new relationships for all things. All Israel and all humanity wait for that saving moment. Through the power of the Holy Spirit Mary has some insight about the Child in her womb. Filled with jubilation she is said to intone the great hymn. God looks benignly on the lowly woman and when Mary does as God bids she becomes the prototype of all humanity. Ruether believes that the *Magnificat* is of vital importance to an understanding of the Church. She points out that the text of the *Magnificat* (Lk 1: 46-55) echoes the hymn of Hannah who is the mother of Samuel. Hannah's favour with God results in the *child elect* who is a symbol of God's redemptive favour upon Israel. Hannah is also redeemed by God from the shame of her barrenness which is used as an image of God's revolutionary power in history.¹²⁰

As with Luke and the *Magnificat* the God of the Hebrew scriptures reverses the present order of power and powerlessness. God breaks the power of the mighty and gives strength to the humble. Ruether takes the trouble to quote 1 Samuel in order to draw the important parallel in Luke. The same will be done here:

thesis in the future to see how the ecclesiatypical approach might be inclusive of the interrelatedness of all things. A basic work on creation theology is to be found in the work of S. McDonagh, *To Care for the Earth*, Geoffrey Chapman, 1986. For an eco-feminist approach see also R. Ruether, *Gaia and God*, Harper, 1992.

¹²⁰ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, p. 152.

...for the Lord is a God of Knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger...The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honour. (1 Sam 2:3-5,7-8).¹²¹

Ruether indicates that while Luke uses Samuel to compare the pregnancies of Mary and Hannah he differs in important ways from Samuel. Hannah's need for *redemption* comes directly from her barrenness. She lacks dignity as a wife because she has no male children. She is ridiculed by her husband's concubine who is fertile. Then God makes the decision, without reference to Hannah, to liberate her. Living in the same tradition Mary should also be ridiculed for, she too, is pregnant and unmarried. Furthermore, Mary has gone too far in making decisions about her own body without regard for her future husband. With this act of insubordination Mary takes the risk of being classed as a prostitute or a *loose woman*. Ruether's interpretation of Luke on the matter shows that unlike Hannah Mary takes the choice upon herself. She enters into an agreement with God through her act of faith not consulting with Joseph. She believes that this is the key to the new redemptive community of Jesus. Mary's birth-giving becomes a symbol of the Church, the new believing community. What this suggests is a real co-creatorship between God and humanity. A free act of faith can only come about when we recognise that unity between our response to God and our own liberation.¹²²

According to Ruether, the consequences of our responses are as follows; if humanity does not respond freely to God God cannot become the transformer of history. Without such faith Christ can do nothing. This is the radical dependence of God on

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

humanity which is the other side of our dependence on God. It is Mary's faith and example as prototype of the Church that makes God's entrance into history possible. God enters history in the person of Christ to bring about a liberating revolution.¹²³ What Ruether portrays is Luke's explicit economic and political language. She insists that it is important to identify correctly this relationship between the Church and the preferential option for the poor. The Church is not to be seen as the representative of the rich doing charitable works for the poor out of the goodness of its heart. Rather, it is God who opts for the poor precisely because the rich have opted against them. This is where the real Church finds itself because the Church is first and foremost those poor and oppressed whom God is vindicating.¹²⁴

Likewise Paul VI makes clear the relationship between Mary and the Church when he says that the Spirit came down on the infant Church in the Upper Room where the Mother of Jesus and the Apostles were present.¹²⁵ Then, sensitive to a new mood among Catholic women in the Church, Paul VI attempted to represent Mary not only as the steely champion of the oppressed but also as a woman of action and resolve. He wrote that Mary should not be thought of as "a mother exclusively concerned with her own divine Son, but rather as a woman whose action helped to strengthen the apostolic community's faith in Christ".¹²⁶ The classic reference of the Church itself to Mary as champion of the oppressed is, of course, the *Magnificat*. In *Redemptoris Mater* John Paul II is so taken with its importance that he quotes the prayer in full.¹²⁷ Like Ruether, John Paul believes that Mary leads the people of God towards the light

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-155.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹²⁵ Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, par. 26, p. 48.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, par. 37, p. 63.

¹²⁷ John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, par. 35, p. 78.

which is shown in a special way in the *Magnificat*. He expresses the *Magnificat* as something that "welled up from the depths of Mary's faith".¹²⁸ The Pope maintains that the *Magnificat* is a particularly prominent theme in times of trials and tribulations for the poor. When the Church makes that important preferential option it becomes intimately involved with the Christian understanding of liberation.¹²⁹

Ruether has an encouraging remark about John Paul's interpretation of the *Magnificat* in a speech contained in a document which he made at the Conference of Latin American bishops (CELAM 111) in 1979.¹³⁰ Of his liberation Marian theology she says that it "is perhaps one of the most important new theological themes to emerge in the Pope's speeches...the bishops follow the Pope in echoing this theme at various points in the final document".¹³¹ It is clear, for Ruether, that the Pope images Mary as the personification of the New Israel, the Church, especially when she represents the marginalised of this earth. Of special interest to Ruether is the fact that the document recognises that women are included among those who are oppressed. Through Mary women in some special way personify the oppressed.¹³² Mary as a woman of the Church, then, is one who is situated in human history. The *Magnificat* tells a tale of the dramatic battle that takes place between good and evil. More importantly within this Mary, as a woman, helps to bridge our understanding of Church and our

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, par. 35, p. 77.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, par. 37, p. 82.

¹³⁰ This was the third of such conferences by the bishops of Latin America who were concerned with the struggles dividing their societies. The churches in Latin America today (which includes a strong Lutheran contingent) are often the only institutions capable of standing up to the cruelty of the fascist regimes. See R. Ruether, "Consciousness Raising at Puebla", *ChrCris* (1979), pp. 77-79.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

understanding of what it means to be a Christian disciple. Now, within this milieu of discipleship Mary of Nazareth assumes a most significant role.

Mary as Disciple

The third theme essential to an understanding of the ecclesiatypical approach concerns Mary's discipleship. Arguably the theme is as acceptable to the official teaching of the Church as it is to Christian feminism. Neither Ruether nor the Church have emphasised Mary's discipleship as much as they might have done. Other areas of Marian theology have witnessed a stronger focus which proves one point. It is not a contentious issue for either party. Therefore, it could be argued that Mary's discipleship can be taken as an established fact compatible with both Church teaching and Christian feminism. Although Ruether does not loudly proclaim Mary's discipleship as such the theme provides an important backdrop to her Marian theology. As Ruether notes Luke's sensitivity to women as members of the poor and despised ensures their vindication in his gospel. She says that "the defense of Mary's right to discipleship (is) among the Lucan stories that lift up the typology of women as people of faith".¹³³

Unexpectedly, one of the Fathers of the Church, Augustine, makes more of Mary's discipleship than he does of her motherhood. He constitutes what he believes to be the true greatness of Mary in saying that:

Certainly, holy Mary fulfilled to perfection the will of the Father and because of this, her status as disciple of Christ is more important than that as Mother of Christ. She is more blessed for being a disciple of Christ than for being the Mother of Christ. Mary was blessed because, before giving birth to her teacher, she carried him in her womb, and she is also blessed because she listened to the Word of God and fulfilled it. Mary carried in her womb the body of Christ but, even

¹³³ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, p. 156.

more, she kept in her heart the truth of Christ. Christ is truth, Christ had a body. Christ, the truth was in Mary's mind. Christ made flesh in a body was in her womb. And what is in the mind is more important than what is in the womb.¹³⁴

This is in stark contrast to the traditional teaching which focusses on the greater importance of Mary's motherhood (*theotokos*) - a theme which was dealt with in the second chapter of this thesis. Reflection on the basic tenet of Augustine's statement adds a new dimension to ecclesiatypology. For too long Mary's position in the tradition has depended ever more strongly on her motherhood placing an unnecessary emphasis on the sexual aspect of her physical maternity. While the present thesis would not in any way wish to reject the important aspect of Mary's maternal role it would be wise to recall the difficulties that have arisen as a result of the teaching on her *virginal motherhood*. Consider the advice of Mary Grey on the subject. After criticising the tradition for portraying Mary as the impossible ideal of virgin-mother Grey goes on to say that it "belongs to the mediaeval symbolizing of Mary as receptacle"...and "it has had its de-personalizing consequences in much of gynaecological practice today".¹³⁵ The difficulties with Mary's being imaged as virgin-mother have been well attested to but an overemphasis on her motherhood is not helpful either. There are many women in Christianity who are not mothers and, therefore, cannot fully relate to a true understanding of that concept.¹³⁶ In addition, there are women who, for some reason or other have never experienced a mother's love. The symbol of motherhood as caring would mean little or nothing to them.

¹³⁴ Cited, in J. Paredes, *Mary and the Kingdom of God*, p. 103.

¹³⁵ M. Grey, "Reclaiming Mary: A Task for Feminist Theology", *TWay*, 29 (1989), p. 336.

¹³⁶ In order to more fully understand a mother's love I believe that one needs to experience motherhood. Only a mother knows the trials and tribulations of giving birth and of caring and worrying about her offspring for the rest of their lives. Only true reciprocation comes with the personal experience of one's own motherhood.

Speaking of Mary as mother, then, is not something to which everybody can relate. On the other hand, everyone can come to learn the meaning of true discipleship. Mary was a Jewish mother but she also came to be a public figure among Jesus' disciples. If we fail to perceive this fact we will never be able to understand, in Marian theology, that all important human dimension of her creaturehood. That is, the theme of Mary's *developing* discipleship. She cast her lot with Jesus when he was bringing about a religious renewal movement which questioned the very traditions and customs in which she had grown up. Mary, more true to her discipleship than most of his other male disciples, stayed with him at the cross when they had fled. Throughout the course of her lifetime Mary struggled with the incomprehensibility of God's ways. She was like any other human being who follows the God whom she does not fully understand. Mary followed Jesus all her life often in the shadow of her own heartbreaking doubt. At times, even Ruether, questions Mary's discipleship. For example, of Mary she says:

The mother does not *seem* (my italics) to be a follower during Jesus' lifetime. She is even hostile to his mission. It is the woman disciple, Mary Magdalene, who puts to shame not only the family but also the male disciples by her faith and her steadfastness at the time of final crisis. These facts must make us put a question mark beside the tradition of Mary, Jesus' mother, as a the woman who best represents "the church".¹³⁷

It is important to note that Ruether does not doubt the mother's capacity to represent the Church she simply points out that Mary Magdalene might be a better representative. Questions such as these are essential to theology but Ruether's possible conclusion comes without much foundation. While the role of the Magdalene has been much maligned and one would want to build up a more positive view of her

¹³⁷ R. Ruether, *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, p. 41.

discipleship in the tradition¹³⁸ there is no account of her being with Jesus in the earlier years of his life. So, to speak of the struggles of developing discipleship in relation to the Magdalene would not be as useful to the understanding of discipleship as it would be to speak of it in relation to the mother. Jesus' mother, on the other hand, was with him from the beginning to the end, from the Annunciation to the cross. Another point worth mentioning is that the Magdalene was much favoured by Jesus. He chose to appear to her at the Resurrection (Mk 16:9) which could be interpreted as meaning that she was in some way rewarded for her fidelity to him. On the other hand, his mother received no such reward. It could be argued, therefore, that his mother was the greater disciple for she, unlike Thomas, was the one who had not seen but believed (Jn 20:29).

Mary Magdalene, then, was rewarded for her brief interlude with Jesus during his public life whereas Mary, his mother, was not. If Mary the mother of Jesus is to be imaged as a prototype of the suffering and struggling Church of today then surely she is the better example of discipleship? We can better identify with the mother of Jesus and her experience of discipleship than we can with the Magdalene because Jesus never appeared to any of us either. One more question is now to be raised relating to the discipleship theme. Since the tradition has always viewed Mary to be a creature of perfection there are those who would consider her discipleship to be one of perfection. Patrick Bearsley in search of a paradigm for Marian theology does not simply write of Mary's discipleship in the order of things as they are portrayed here. Instead, he writes of Mary as the *perfect* disciple believing that particular paradigm to be "rich and powerful enough to provide a vantage point from which to view all the

¹³⁸ See E. Schussler Fiorenza for an excellent scripturally based account of the meaning of "true discipleship" and Mary Magdalene's place within that context. E. Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 315-334.

other great truths about Mary".¹³⁹

The difficulty with Bearsley's approach is quite obviously his understanding of *perfection* which he imputes to Mary.¹⁴⁰ When Bearsley introduces the term *perfect* in relation to Mary he justifies himself by saying that he is aware of Mary's need to grow in appreciation of what it means to be a disciple throughout the rest of her life.¹⁴¹ He adds that Mary's *perfect discipleship* is not a static term which implies that she has already reached a position where further development is no longer possible. Rather, Mary warrants the title because she "responded perfectly to these new demands (of her discipleship) and increasingly matured in perfection until her mission reached its climax at the foot of the cross".¹⁴² Does Bearsley mean that Mary actually achieved that state of *perfect* discipleship by the time she stood at the foot of the cross? If this is what he means then he is implying that humanity can know perfection. Humanity cannot know perfection in any aspect of life. Only Christ is capable of this. Furthermore, he depends on theatypical and christatypical themes in his call for the new paradigm of perfect discipleship. Bearsley claims:

By means of the perspective given by this paradigm, Mary's divine motherhood, her role in the Church, and the true significance of her virginity can be understood coherently as facets of the one whole which is the mystery of Mary in the plan of man's salvation.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ P. Bearsley, "Mary the Perfect Disciple: A Paradigm for Mariology", TS 41/3 (1980), p. 469.

¹⁴⁰ Raymond Brown, instead, talks of *true discipleship*. He points out that in Luke in relation to the mysterious conception "Mary responded to that confrontation as a true disciple obedient to the word of God; and Luke assures us that her initial confrontation was also that of an ideal disciple". R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, p. 318.

¹⁴¹ P. Bearsley, "Mary the Perfect Disciple: A Paradigm for Mariology", TS 41/3 (1980), p. 482.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

A sentence taken from Bertrand Buby will help to act as a disclaimer in relation to Bearsley's statement. Buby credits the Second Vatican Council for presenting Mary in a way that is encouraging for us as disciples of Jesus. He goes on to say that we "now find her as she is in the Sacred Scriptures - a strong woman who is as human as we are".¹⁴⁴ Keeping in mind the fact that the ecclesiastical approach does not allow for theotypal and christotypal elements it would be difficult to see how Bearsley's use of these could be aligned with a woman "who is as human as we are". If Mary truly symbolises what we are called to be then it is vital that we relate to her through her humanity.

Alternatively it could be argued by Christian feminists that discipleship is a non-liberating concept especially for women in the Catholic Church. Can we be disciples when the Church prevents us from following that vocation if it might want to take, for example, the form of ordination? The answer is yes we can if we keep to the forefront of our minds the revolutionary tenets of the *Magnificat* which arguably shows up Mary to be a liberation theologian! In this respect practising disciples criticise the patriarchal structure, and exposes its institutional, scriptural and theological forms of expression.

With Mary as an ecclesial symbol, that is, in the ecclesiastical sense women for their part now have a role model who is freed from the power of the patriarchy. Women, wherever they are must examine their own experiences and particular forms of oppression. Within the Church they will find a realistic woman in Mary of Nazareth. Women might look again at Mary in a different way. Not by trying to reinterpret the theotypal and christotypal symbols but by an attempt to envisage Mary living out her life in history as an ordinary Jewish woman. Here was a woman who succeeded

¹⁴⁴ B. Buby, *Mary the Faithful Disciple*, p. 124.

even although she found herself having to operate within the confines of her religious and social heritage. As women in the Church we can see that Mary had a strong sense of her own identity and personhood. She had the courage to make choices *and mistakes* (for example, in trying to get Jesus to come home from those times when he was preaching and thought to be mad Mt 12:46-50). In addition, she had the confidence to live with the consequences of those choices even although there were many times when she must have felt bewildered by God. At the end of it all did Mary turn away? No, she was found in the Upper Room. This leads into the final element in the ecclesiatypical approach. That is, Mary as the guide of those women who choose to stay in the Upper Room, the Church, even when their discontent of its structure is strong enough to make them want to leave.

Mary as Womanguide

What is particularly noteworthy about the ecclesiatypical approach is that it becomes the *basis* for the liberation of women since it liberates Mary and casts her in the light of normal womanhood. This is something that women did not have before in either the theatypical or christatypical traditions. Ecclesiatypology takes seriously the female personification of the Church making it a very different establishment from the one it has become in time and history. Here we are moving beyond the typology of Christ and the Church as dominant male and submissive female. Since woman has been despised or second class in the Church for so long it is woman for whom the preferential option is most pertinent. She has symbolic priority in the ecclesiatypical Church with a model in Mary whom she can follow. Now women can also represent the Church and help to lead it out from patriarchy and hierarchy to community. With Mary as model women can see a reflection of their own sex. She is a model of encouragement and liberation.

What the ecclesiatypical approach does is to show that Mary is a model of resistance and a symbol that should not be surrendered because the tradition in the past has used and abused her through that symbol. In this respect Mary is no longer that static model of idealised and divinised perfection. Instead, she becomes a dynamic model of earthly, human struggle, the model of a pilgrim people in solidarity with Jesus and each other in their journey towards God. Her biological motherhood has been relativised and her faith in the Word of God has been highlighted. Mary is not now that impossible model for every believer. If women were to be asked what models and images they choose as most expressive of their perceptions and aspirations it is more likely that they would choose something with which they could identify. It could certainly be argued at this stage that the ecclesiatypical approach would be more acceptable than either the theatypical or the christatypical. Yet, is this enough? Can this woman who has been so highly objectivised and who has had to carry so much idealised weight really represent women who are trying to affirm themselves within the structure? Yes she can, provided we are aware that the ecclesiatypical approach is only a starting point. The very essence of this approach is that it attempts to be a point of contact between the authorities of the Church and its feminists within.

Since the search for a mediation point involves the good will of both sides at a theological as well as a practical level the Church authorities must also be satisfied with the ecclesiatypical approach. Although the Second Vatican Council introduced an ecclesiological emphasis in its treatment of Mary more could have been done to draw out the implications of that emphasis in subsequent years. The awakening of the official Church to the equal dignity of women as shown, for example, in the documents of the American bishops and John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem* could have been improved by placing a greater emphasis on an understanding of Mary as a model for contemporary women. After all she has been portrayed as the great woman of the tradition. If this is the way the Church wishes to continue to portray Mary there

appears to be no solid reason why the elements contained in the ecclesiastical approach could not be considered as a new foundation upon which to build.

The real problem, of course, lies in the symbols of the theotypical and christotypical approaches. The authorities will not be too ready to relieve the tradition of this unnecessary cargo. However, with enough sincerity and good will the official Church might be able to enter into an ecclesiatypology with optimal creativity. As Rosemary Ruether says "(however) startling and original the vision, it must always be communicated and made meaningful through some transformation of ideas and symbols already current".¹⁴⁵ The ecclesiastical approach offers something different to the mere elaboration of Marian titles as portrayed by the tradition. It shows that it is possible to produce a Marian theology as an alternative to the dominant one with a foundation which is acceptable to the Church and a model of liberation that is acceptable to women at one and the same time. In addition, perhaps women who have become extremely hostile to the traditional portrayal of Mary may now wish to move to a more constructive position. In the words of Ann Loades:

...if we could by-pass sugary sweetness and dizzy immobilisation on a pedestal, then Mary might be re-associated with the affirmation and not the negation of what women discover themselves to be, and we might re-connect Mary to present needs.¹⁴⁶

Mary as womanguide within the ecclesiastical approach represents a stage in exploration at a number of different levels. She reaches out to all women within the Church; to women who have left the Church; to the authorities of the Church; to the laymen of the Church who not only empathise with their woman but who themselves feel the weight of hierarchical oppression and finally but not least to our sisters and brothers outside Catholicism who work so hard to keep ecumenism as an option to be

¹⁴⁵ R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ A. Loades, "The Virgin Mary and the Feminist Quest", AE, p. 172.

supported and respected for the betterment of humanity. Ecclesiatypology is not a theology of privilege but one which attempts to clarify Mary's role in the history of salvation. Mary in this capacity is the very transparency of God's love taking centre stage as the human and feminine face of the Church. If John Paul II really means what he says in relation to women in his document *Mulieris Dignitatem* perhaps he might be allowed to have the last say in the matter. For it could be argued that Mary as womanguide comes out clearly in the following ecclesiatypical statement:

Drawing from Mary's heart, from the depth of her faith expressed in the words of the *Magnificat*, the Church renews ever more effectively in herself the awareness that *the truth about God who saves, the truth about God who is the source of every gift, cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love of preference for the poor and humble that love which, celebrated in the Magnificat, is later expressed in the words and works of Jesus.*¹⁴⁷

As members of a credal and confessing Church what better way to recognise the unexplored potential of womanhood than to image Mary not as Boff's theotypical *Maternal Face of God* but as Ruether's ecclesiatypical *Feminine Face of the Church*? In this way Mary will not once distract us from the centrality of her Son nor will she distract us from that fundamental vision of God that is incomprehensibly more than male or female. Rather, in her own way Mary will help us to understand the kenotic power of a God that lived and moved and had its being, as Godself, for nine months within the womb of an ordinary woman, within the womb of womanhood.

¹⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer*, par. 37, p. 82.

CONCLUSION

In summation, the conclusion to this thesis will now make its vital claim. That is, within the ecclesiatypical approach to Marian theology it is possible to find a basic structure which is common to both the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the beliefs of its Christian feminists therein. At the outset it was hoped that the findings of the thesis would encourage women of the Church not to leave it despite its oppressive hierarchical and patriarchal power. For centuries women have found themselves at the bottom of the ladder unable to contribute to the Church in a way that Christ no doubt intended. The antagonists of Christian feminism would hope that in time the voices of dissent would be abated and peace would reign once again in the Church. It has often been said, for example, that if the Church can survive the Borgia popes it can survive anything. However, unlike any other period of history a great new phenomenon is fast emerging. That is, the education of the masses fifty per cent of whom are women. Women now have the capacity and the learning to openly ask the soul searching questions that their forebears did not. This means that there is a greater awareness of the injustices not only in the world at large but within the Church itself. Among the worst, within the Church, is the great sin of sexism all too often encouraged by a celibate totalitarian system that cannot let go of the *status quo*.

The assessment of the situation is simple. On the one hand, we have an apparently intransigent structure. On the other hand, we have women in the Church who have gained a measure of spiritual and intellectual independence which they did not possess in the past. In between there is a barrier which, if not broken down, is likely to result in a marginalisation of the entire Church as an Institution sometime in the next century. The certainty of this statement lies in the fact that the Church depends far more on its women than it does on its men. Women are the mainstay of the Church, they are normally the educators of the children and they outnumber men at Church Services.

The loyalty of the majority of Church women cannot be expected to last much longer. In this thesis, therefore, it was necessary to outline some of the more overriding difficulties that have existed in the tradition for centuries. This was the chief reason for the format of the first chapter of this thesis. There was no need to develop or analyse these difficulties in any great detail since they are well attested to in the works of Christian feminists in general.

However, since a statement of the case was, nonetheless, required a feminist critique was selected from the writings of Rosemary Radford Ruether. Ruether was chosen for three reasons. Firstly, her prolific and learned work is an inspiration to those who are searching for an answer to the Church/feminist problem in the Institution. Secondly, she insists that the only way to effect change is to remain within the Church working from the institutional base. Thirdly, it was found that Ruether's works contained the germ of a possible way forward particularly noticeable in the ecclesiological aspects of her Marian writings. Some of Ruether's feminist perspectives were then outlined and analysed in order to highlight the Institution's patriarchal/hierarchical heritage and how it affects contemporary women. Contained in this heritage is a patriarchalisation of christology with its attendant strands of sexism, dualism, and the exclusion of women from the ordained ministry of the Catholic Church.

It was then shown that Christian women such as Mary Daly left the Church subsequently espousing post-Christian feminism. They found that the Institution had become intolerable for women and were disheartened by the fact that there appeared to be no hope of change in the more contentious issues concerning women. Thus began the learned voices of female dissent for the present century. For people like Daly even Christ has to be abandoned because an all pervasive patriarchy has prevented him from becoming a true symbol of liberation. Ruether, on the other hand, would not countenance such drastic measures. So a thesis that was going to follow Ruether's

example had to find the catalyst. Ironically, that catalyst was to be found within the very teaching of the Church's own official documents written at the time of the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965). Even more ironically the seeds of hope sprang from a tiny ten page commentary written not about the great men of the Church but about just one woman. Over one thousand pages of the Council's documents could now be left aside in order to focus on that woman, Mary of Nazareth. The woman, Mary, became the hope of mediation and reconciliation.

The teaching of the Council portrayed a two-tiered perspective on Marian theology that promised to provide a Christianity acceptable to the authorities and to women. However, it is clear that this was not the Council's aim. It was only by accident that the answer to the problem came. The Council was concerned merely with the right ordering of devotion to Mary in relation to her Son. The Marian teaching, which was placed within the overall context of a document entitled *Lumen Gentium*, called for both a christological and an ecclesiological way of viewing Mary. The christological perspective was meant to be the focus from which an ecclesiological portrayal of Mary was to come into effect. It had the advantage of proving that all things find their meaning and foundation in Christ. What was significant about this approach was that it placed Mary within the context of the Church *as a member* thus avoiding false exaggerations which might distract the faithful from her Son. However, things were not to be so simple. Despite the fact that the Vatican Council wished to eliminate certain unacceptable exaggerations about Mary it retained many of the symbols which contributed to those very exaggerations in the first place. There was an unhappy side effect in that by not eliminating all the problematic symbols Mary, for the most part, still retained those ethereal qualities bestowed on her by the tradition. As always the higher that Mary was placed in the scheme of things the more lowly and abased ordinary women appeared to be. The Council, in its retention of these Marian symbols, had done little to change the lowly image of women.

However, there was enough in the Council's ecclesiological stance which enabled the present thesis to build up the base for a new Marian theology. Yet, something of a more radical departure was required. That took the form of an ecclesiological approach to Marian theology. This approach claims that Mary is to be taken as a type for the Church by retrieving some of the more acceptable elements already contained in the tradition. The selection of those elements was difficult for it meant ridding Marian theology of a considerable number of symbols that have been held dear by the Church at large for centuries. In addition, the selectivity called for a new process of categorisation which has not been witnessed in Marian theology to date. The findings showed that the discipline could be broken down into three major headings which imaged Mary in three different ways. The first saw Mary as a type for God where she assumed the role of Goddess. The second treated of Mary as a type for Christ or a super-human being where she was seen to be always at Christ's side, sometimes taking over his role but, nonetheless, subordinate to him. The third, imaged Mary as a type for the Church where she stands with the people of the Church helping them to live out their faith in the course of their lifetime. These are now known respectively as the theatypical, christatypical and ecclesiastypical approaches to Marian theology.

The theatypical approach eliminated all in the tradition that was deemed unsuitable for the new Marian theology. The same is to be said for the christatypical approach. Within that context it was necessary to find out whether or not Rosemary Ruether's theology contained any such elements. Like other theologians, male and female, it was relatively easy to find both elements in question. However, further research into Ruether's work clearly portrays that she deems Goddess feminism as unsatisfactory. From here it was not too difficult to see that the reasons for Ruether's rejection of Goddess feminism could be applied to her understanding of Mary. Ruether, because of the weaknesses of Goddess feminist theology, would not apply its findings to Mary. Therefore, she could

not be classed overall as a theatypical theologian. Nor is Ruether a christatypical theologian. Consideration of her work at this level also betrayed christatypical elements but by and large they were not among the most important in Ruether's *oeuvre*. Significantly Ruether preferred to image Mary as a model of symbolic ecclesiology. Therein lay the hope of a foundation for the new ecclesiatypical approach.

Despite the new hope which was found in Ruether's work it was obvious that she was not a Marian theologian. (Catholicism appears to be somewhat lacking in feminist Marian theologians at least in the Western world). Although Ruether's basic Marian ideas were essential to this thesis it was necessary to obtain a support system from outside of her work. One has to keep in mind that although Ruether's Marian writings are crucial they are sparse. In the midst of this Marian enquiry, therefore, it was time to bring another relevant piece of research to light. That was the initiative taken by the American bishops. By research and dialogue they listened to the experiences of the women in the Church. This took place over a considerable number of years. However, after a lengthy course of discussions, jubilations and disappointments it was found that the old traditional stumbling blocks manifested themselves yet again. The talks while noteworthy have more or less failed to take account of the real needs and desires of women in the Institution. Despite some of the many fine sentiments expressed in the documents of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Pope John Paul II's contribution, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the hoped for convergence proved to be illusive once again. Particularly useful was Ruether's critique of the first of the American documents. She found that while there was a great deal of progress made the Institution was not yet ready or able to shake off its intransigence on the more crucial matters.

Perhaps if the talks between the bishops and the women were proving fruitful it would not have been necessary for this thesis to invest so much hope in a Marian programme. While it was obvious that the Conference of bishops and women were having difficulty

in dialogue there were some important theological non-Marian themes worth considering in Ruether. Here another kind of theology was proving useful for the thesis and one which would provide a support structure for the new Marian theology. It was in and through Ruether's understanding of liberation theology. Her work contained elements of liberation that were similar to the liberation themes found in official Church documents. The significant ideas centred around certain aspects of the Reign of God and the practice of the man Jesus. Once these liberating principles had been discovered in the two theologies in question a new and sharper focus for liberation could be realised in the ecclesiatypical approach to Marian theology. Now there was a supporting base outside Marian theology which permitted an all important parallel to be drawn between the work of Christ as Redeemer and Mary's cooperation as symbolic of one who is redeemed.

A new approach to Marian theology, however, was not yet possible until some recognition was given to the works of feminist theologians other than that of Ruether's. A sample selection of these women writing on Mary proved interesting. These theologians attempted to retrieve the theology by redefining its symbolism and Mary's place within that. Redefinition generally meant a reinterpretation of the theotypical and christatypical symbolic elements. These same theologians often included ecclesiatypical elements but none had a complete ecclesiatypical approach. Specifically ecclesiatypology is a way of interpreting Mary as she is found in the scriptures. She lives and works by Jesus' side but for the most part she does not fully understand what he is about. There are times when she feels bewildered and even rejected by him. Nonetheless, she holds on in faith because somewhere deep down inside Mary knows that Jesus' ways are God's ways despite their incomprehensibility.

The return to the historical Mary reveals a number of themes which are acceptable to both the teaching of the Church and to Ruether's Christian feminism. The

ecclesiatypical approach proper is, at last, a base from which to work. A key aspect of its root is that it reinterprets Mary in relation to Christ. Once a proper perspective has been established at this level the path is clear for the new Marian model. In imitation of the liberation theology of Latin America ecclesiatypology becomes the symbol of hope and liberation for all people. Mary's liberating message springs from her prayer of praise to God which is otherwise known as the *Magnificat*. However, none of this comes easily to Mary, who as a disciple of Jesus, must struggle in her pilgrimage to set all creation free. Her duty as a handmaid of the Lord is to attempt to do what Jesus did, that is, to turn the world of corruption, poverty and inequality upside down. Most importantly of all the ecclesiatypical approach shows that an ordinary woman has the capacity to attempt such a programme of reform.

Women of the Church in turn will be able to see in Mary a woman who is like themselves in practically every way. When women speak of their vision for the Church of the future it is often in terms of a return to the gospel values. A new Marian theology based on the ecclesiatypical approach is about returning to those values. By stripping away the inegalitarian layers of dishonesty that have accumulated around Mary women find strength and companionship from a model within the Institution. In this way and not in any other does Mary become an exemplary symbol of equality. The four basic elements of the ecclesiatypical model, that is, Mary as Symbol of Liberation, Mary's *Magnificat*, Mary as Disciple and Mary as Womanguide portray best of all St. Paul's dictum:

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28).

Keeping the ideal of equality in mind the question that was originally raised in this thesis is now to be raised again. That question asks if it is possible to find a theological

approach which would be acceptable to Christian feminists and to the Church authorities at one and the same time? Looking at ecclesiatypology it would appear that there is not anything in the approach proper that would not appeal to either party. The Second Vatican Council and subsequent Church documents have shown that a return to the scriptures is an all important way of doing theology. It is doubtful that any Christian feminist would also want to do otherwise. Perhaps it is naive to expect that such a basic approach might be able to strike a balance where none has been struck before. Given the complexities that have accumulated in a two thousand year tradition the challenge of trying to find a mediation point might be more than the ecclesiastical model can carry. Ecclesiatypology in its raw new state as outlined in this thesis has a long way to go. However, even a brief look at its basic tenets will show that it has the capacity to effect change. Ecclesiatypology might be the foundational hope of a Church in transition in contrast to a Church in schism.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACR	The Australasian Catholic Record
AE	After Eve
Anima	Anima: An Experimental Journal of Celebration
Assess 1	Vatican 11 Assessment and Perspectives Vol 1
BSer	Biblical Series
Bulletin	Bulletin: The Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem
CaseStud	Case Studies in Christ and Salvation
CDF	Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
ChrCris	Christianity and Crisis
ChurStrug	Churches in Struggle: Liberation Theology and Social Change in North America
Com	Communio
Conc	Concilium
CTS	Catholic Truth Society
CTSA	Catholic Theological Society of America
CurTheoMis	Currents in Theology and Mission
DChur	A Democratic Church
DCT	Dictionary of Christian Theology
DL	Doctrine and Life
DT	Doing Theology in a Divided World
ecumenist	the ecumenist
Eglise	Eglise et Theologie
Etudes	Etudes Mariales: Bulletin de la Societe Francaise d'Etudes Mariales
Fathers	Fathers of the Church
FIB	Feminist Interpretation of the Bible
Fur	The Furrow

HPR	Homiletic and Pastoral Review
ITQ	Irish Theological Quarterly
JBC	Jerome Biblical Commentary
JEcumStuds	Journal of Ecumenical Studies
JWomRel	Journal of Women and Religion
MAW	Mary According to Women
MCath	Modern Catholicism
MChur	Mary in the Church
MillStud	Milltown Studies
Misogynism	Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church
MRed	Mother of the Redeemer
NCE	New Catholic Encyclopedia
NCCB	National Conference of Catholic Bishops
NCR	National Catholic Reporter
NDCT	New Dictionary of Christian Theology
NDT	New Dictionary of Theology
NTM	New Testament Message
OR	L'Osservatore Romano
PIBA	Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association
PP	Priests and People
QSpecUrgen	Questions of Special Urgency
RCult	Religion and Culture in Dialogue
RPluralism	Radical Pluralism and Truth: David Tracey and the Hermeneutics of Religion
RelSex	Religion and Sexism
RelStudR	Religious Studies Review
ScotJourTheo	Scottish Journal of Theology
SChurLaw	Sexism and Church Law

ST	Systematic Theology
TCC	The Christian Century
TChur	The Church and Women
Tablet	The Tablet
TI	Theological Investigations
TMonth	The Month
TS	Theological Studies
TToday	Theology Today
TWay	The Way
VatCounc2	The Second Vatican Council
WCP	Women and the Catholic Priesthood
WHist	The Word in History
WNF	Who Needs Feminism
WP	Women Priests
WS	Women of Spirit

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